# Operating Staff Personnel Advisor – Annual Review

FY 2025 (July 2024 – June 2025)

Prepared for Jim Slagstad, Operating Staff Council, and Patricia Erickson, University Council

## Background

The Operating Staff Personnel Advisor (OSPA) position was created in 2016 through the cooperation of the Operating Staff Council, the University Council and then Executive Vice President and Provost and current President, Lisa Freeman. I was appointed to the remainder of the previous OSPA’s term on October 1, 2023 and elected for a three-year term in July 2024.

## OSPA’s Directives

I serve as a private resource and consultant to all civil service employees. Specifically, my duties and responsibilities include, but are not limited to, the following:

* Advise civil service staff about personnel policies and procedures at NIU, as well as with the State Universities Civil Service System (SUCSS).
* Advise and assist staff members who are not covered by a collective bargaining agreement negotiated with NIU regarding personnel or employment concerns.
* Guide employees who are represented by a union that bargains directly with NIU to appropriate resources within their collective bargaining unit for issues related to wages, hours, and conditions of employment, etc.
* Accompany, upon request, the employee to both disciplinary and performance evaluation meetings, to meetings with AAEOE staff when filing a complaint or serving as a witness, and to meetings with Human Resource Services staff.
* Observe NIU’s personnel and employment processes and suggest needed changes or clarifications through collaboration with Human Resource Services and the Office of General Counsel.

## Highlights of FY2025 Contact Hours

From July 1, 2024 – June 30, 2025

* I helped 21 civil service employees over a total of 46 meetings (both virtual and in-person), 14 phone calls, and over 227 emails.
* Of the 21 employees, I met with 11 of them at least two times or more.
* 13 of the 21 cases are considered closed at this time. The other eight still have pending outcomes yet to be finalized or resolved.
* Topics included:
  + Staff grievances/concerns
  + Performance improvement
  + Job changes, remote work arrangement changes and job description discrepancies
  + Corrective action
  + Investigatory interviews
  + Mistreatment by supervisors
  + SOEAA mistakes
  + ADA accommodations
  + Interpersonal issues
  + Pay clarifications

## Interactions with Administration, Faculty and Staff

Over the past seven months, I have attended meetings or sent emails on behalf of civil service employees with various NIU representatives including: Brian Smith, Cathy Doederlein, Carrie Kortegast, Joe Lovelace, Cody Carter, Sarah Garner, and John Acardo.

## OSPA’s Goals for FY 2026 and Beyond:

* Continue collaboration with the other personnel advisors, Carrie Kortegast and Cody Carter, as well as Brian Smith, director of Employee Well-being, Cathy Doederlein, director of Employee Experience and Sandy Cox, ombudsperson.
* Develop and produce OSPA brochure and other marketing materials and one-sheets about frequently discussed issues such as retaliation.
* Develop and maintain a webpage that responds to current employee issues and concerns.
* Continue to actively seek the opportunity to educate campus about the OSPA role.
* Encourage senior leadership to require (or strongly encourage) all supervisors and

foremen to take EAP’s “Supervisor Training Program Cohort Group” series.

Respectfully submitted,

Holly A. Nicholson

Assistant Director, Web Communications and 2025 Office of the President Staff Fellow

Operating Staff Personnel Advisor