

TRANSCRIPT

FACULTY SENATE

Wednesday, January 26, 2022, 3 p.m.
Barsema Alumni and Visitors Center
231 N. Annie Glidden Road
Northern Illinois University
DeKalb, Illinois

VOTING MEMBERS PRESENT: Akst, Birch, Bohanon, Carpenter, Cheyney, Chomentowski, D. Collins, V. Collins, Creed, Demir, Duffin, Duffrin, Gorman, Groza (for Fredericks), Grund, Hu, Hua, Hunter, Ito, Johnson, Jong, Keddie, Lampi, Liberty, Lulinski, Maki, Marsh, McConkie, McGowan, McKee, Mellon, Miguel, Montana, Montgomery, Nesterov, Palese, Penkrot, Politis (for Haidar), Qin, Richter, Saborío (for Smith), Serowka, Sharp, Sirotkin, Slotsve, Staikidis, Sullivan, Vaezi, Vahabzadeh, Valentiner, Whedbee

VOTING MEMBERS ABSENT: Books, Bujarski, Chen, Chung, Clark, Engel, Fredericks, Haidar, Knoll, Smith

OTHERS PRESENT: Bryan, Hodson, Ingram

OTHERS ABSENT: Beyer, Falkoff, Ferguson, Jaekel

I. CALL TO ORDER

P. Chomentowski: I'm going to call the meeting to order today. This is the Faculty Senate meeting for Wednesday, January 26, 2022.

II. VERIFICATION OF QUORUM

P. Chomentowski: Pat, do we have a verification of quorum?

P. Erickson: We do have quorum, and thanks, everybody, for your patience. And special thanks to our IT guy, Tony, for helping us out. We're having a connection problem, but he went to Plan B, and we appreciate that. I also want to remind you to fill out the attendance sheet at your place. And then just leave it there; we'll collect it after the meeting.

And my plea that you haven't heard for a couple months now. Remember that the meeting is being recorded and, even though we might be able to hear you in this room, if you don't use a microphone, it won't be on our recording. If you want to make a motion or a comment or ask a question, please just go to one of the microphones, either up front or at the sides there, and we appreciate that. Thanks.

III. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

P. Chomentowski: We'll move on to the adoption of the agenda. Can I have someone make a motion and a second to adopt the agenda for today?

F. Bohanon: So moved.

D. Valentiner: Second.

P. Chomentowski: All right, all those in favor, say aye.

Members: Aye.

P. Chomentowski: All those opposed, say no. Any abstentions. All right, the agenda is adopted.

IV. APPROVAL OF THE NOVEMBER 17, 2021, MINUTES – Pages 4-6

P. Chomentowski: We'll move on to approval of the November 27 [17], 2021 minutes. Again, can I have a motion and a second to approve the minutes from the November 27 [17] meeting?

D. Valentiner: So moved.

Unidentified: Second.

P. Chomentowski: All those in favor, say aye.

Members: Aye.

P. Chomentowski: All those opposed, say no. Any abstentions? All right, approval of the minutes.

V. PUBLIC COMMENT

P. Chomentowski: We'll move on to public comment. Pat, do we have any public comment for today?

P. Erickson: No public comment today.

VI. FACULTY SENATE PRESIDENT'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

P. Chomentowski: We'll move on to the Faculty Senate president's announcements. Basically, I just want to say welcome back for the spring semester, and thank you for all coming out. Wish it was a little warmer outside, but hopefully, it's going to warm up in the next few days.

VII. ITEMS FOR FACULTY SENATE CONSIDERATION

- A. Human Resource Services
Bill Hodson, Senior Associate Vice President

P. Chomentowski: We'll move on to items for Faculty Senate to consider. Today, we have a guest speaker, Bill Hodson. He's the senior associate vice president of Human Resource Services. I asked him to come speak. I'll give you the exact reason why. I was here for seven years and in the last six years, I don't know who was in charge of HR. I really had no idea. I've asked some other people who didn't either. So, I wanted to have Bill come speak so that everyone in here can get to know him. He's going to talk a little bit about his background, how he ended up coming to NIU. And then he'll take some question and answer time if you want to ask him questions that are related to the Human Resource Services. Please welcome Bill Hodson.

B. Hodson: Thank you so much for the invitation today. I appreciate it. What a great turnout. Peter said I could walk over here, but he probably wasn't examining the weather. I didn't walk over, just so you don't worry about that. Well, it's been great to be here. It's coming up on almost six months now, and it's been a real privilege and joy to be here. I've learned an awful lot about the organization. There are some amazing things about the organization and about HR. There are also some things that I think I can help with, too. So, we'll talk about both the opportunities and some of the struggles and things like that, some of the things that are ahead.

Peter did ask that I give some of my background. He said I've got an hour and a half to talk, did you say that, right? That may not be enough. I'll give you a little bit about my background. Many people who know me say, well, this weather is nothing for you. You've come from Minnesota. And I say, yes, but I had to get used to Minnesota, because I'm a native Californian. So, born and raised in southern California. Met my wife in high school, we just celebrated our 39th anniversary just last week. She's in Minnesota working at Mayo Clinic where I came from, and we see each other every couple weeks; but she'll eventually move down here. We raised our two boys in California; actually, they were born in California, they were raised in Indiana. But both of them married wives who said, I'm not going to live in the snow. So, they both moved to warmer weather. One's in Texas with a couple grandkids of ours; the older one is back in Los Angeles, just a few miles from where I grew up. So, our kids have chosen warmer weather. But both my wife and I love the Midwest and see us being here for many years.

My educational background – went to Cal State Northridge in southern California. Really enjoyed that. A school with a little bit larger enrollment to this organization, but very similar in terms of our diversity and our focus. If you're familiar with the Cal State system, again, very, very large system. But Cal State Northridge very similar to this, a suburb about 40-50 miles from Los Angeles, very similar demographic, so, great to be there.

My experience has been in HR. It's probably hard to imagine somebody being in HR for 41 years now, but I've loved every minute of it. And I've had a chance to work in both the public and the non-profit and the private sectors. I've worked for high tech firms, for government research centers. My very first job out of college – and I'll have to date myself, this is going back to 1980 – was working for a division of the Rand Corporation. Anybody familiar with Rand? I worked for the

system development division, and we were designing back at that time some of the first computers. And they were as big as this room and probably did about what our iPhones do, really, to be honest.

One of the interesting things that I got to do working there in HR is we were always on the cutting edge, even back then in the 1980s, is we were developing a voice recognition system using – and this dates myself, so you can raise your hand if you know what I'm talking about – we used a deck PDP 11-780 using PathScale – there's a few of you, okay, perfect – to be able to understand voice recognition. And what we were doing is we were producing an employment application. Isn't that amazing? So, that was a great beginning for me. Several years at that organization again, working for defense electronic companies, private companies, manufacturers, others.

Came back to the Midwest, because my wife's family's here, landed in Bloomington, Indiana, where Indiana University is, and worked there for a number of years. Had an opportunity to complete my graduate degree in what we call the O'Neill School of Public and Environmental Affairs where we call it SPEA. So, very similar to our M.P.A. program that we have here on campus, and talking to Kurt [Thurmaier] and others in that group, a lot of connectivity between the two schools. So, I'm a grad from IU. So, to come here, I just had to put the N in front of it. The colors are almost the same, very similar. And sometimes they're better in basketball, but they're probably never better in football, so I'll just say that.

After leaving Indiana University, I went to the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota. That's where I really got used to weather like this, because the recruiter for Mayo Clinic said, you know, the weather here is about the same as southern Indiana. They were quite wrong. It's very different. So, the temperatures up there today are probably about ten degrees colder. I think Rochester, Minnesota was even on the news this morning. But hopefully, we won't be, here, in the next week. But a great opportunity to work for such a large organization, 70,000 employees, ranked as one of the best hospitals in the world. And I really had a chance to work in a number of different areas for the organization to expand, so they're doing very well. But I will say that they're fielding some real issues. One thing that they did recently, for good reason, but you may be on different sides of the fence. Most everybody here is wearing a mask, except me. But Mayo Clinic made it a mandate where you had to be vaccinated to work there, and so 700 employees were terminated just a couple weeks ago because of that. We're not doing that here yet, right, we're good.

But I just wanted to share, coming from very large, very sophisticated organizations, and hoping to bring my skills and put them to good use here. Again, I love being in academia. Working for such a large hospital system was amazing, but a pretty big organization with 70,000. So, this is just the right size for me, and I appreciate the invitation to be here.

Let me talk a little bit about some of the things that I've done and why I came here. My goal is to, hopefully, help an organization grow and thrive. And that, of course, involves the people. I'm not necessarily one that's going to bring in ideas that are foreign to the organization, but to work with what we have to say, how can we make this a better place, a place where the culture is positive, that people want to get up in the morning and come to work, no matter what your job is, people who feel valued and appreciated, and individuals who really want to contribute to the mission. Working for both nonprofits and for-profits, being a mission-driven organization, having a purpose to what we do, something that's greater than just the job we do, but to see where our job is connected to the

greater goal, is really important. And I found that, over the years, it's not about, for me, it's not about money and it's not about fame and fortune and things like that. It's like, are we really making a difference? And you would see that, probably, in anybody who comes from a nonprofit organization.

Coming to HR and asking lots and lots of questions of my staff and others – and it's a great staff, they work really hard – but we have lots of struggles, so I don't want to hide that fact. Many of those of you who are waiting for classifications to be analyzed, which is part of a desk audit, or waiting for a position to be filled, or not getting a response, I apologize on that. We're really, really understaffed in a number of areas, and we're really slow, we're really stuck. And so I welcome your ideas, concerns or thoughts. Feel free to reach out to me outside of this and say, Bill, I'm really having a problem. And I've extended that, certainly, to our senior roundtable and other leaders. So, I want to be in touch with that.

And then for the last several months, our provost in the back knows this, and maybe my work has been kind of so-so. I wanted to work in the role of an employment coordinator to really understand some of the struggles that our department's going through, and they assigned me to the Provost's Office. She hasn't kicked me out yet, but she has reason to. My work's been pretty so-so.

We have a lot of good intentions in HR, but we have some very complicated systems. We have some complicated policies, and my goal is to help streamline a lot of that, to make this a more efficient and effective HR department. So, I certainly welcome your input where you felt either that you've been wronged or mistreated or negatively impacted by a particular policy or procedure. One of my goals this year is to review all HR policies. And I woke up one morning and took a look at the policies – and I really appreciate the Policy Library – and I saw that my name was on all these hundred policies, even the dated back dozens of years before I ever came. And I thought, oh-oh, if my name's associated with this, I really need to make sure that this is a fair and equitable policy and procedure. But, if any of you have concerns or issues or feel like we need to take a look at that, feel free to reach out and let me know. I want to hear your input.

So, we've got our struggles in HR, and I appreciate your support and patience as we get through that. We are hiring people. We are backfilling positions. We're exploring a number of different avenues to distribute the work so we can be more effective and really be more of a partner on campus. We have some systems, some that are old and some that are new, but maybe not formatted real well. For example, for those of you who are involved with graduate students and so forth, that's still an appointment process that's not well automated. And so our goal by the end of the summer is to automate that using PeopleAdmin. But if you're aware of other idiosyncrasies with our systems, feel free to share that with me.

If I were to put together some of my goals, I'll just use a few words to describe that. These are all goals that I hope to achieve this year. One is to make sure that our organization is accessible. And that's not only with hours to our office building, which is obviously way out to the west end of the campus, but to be accessible and to be available. I've heard it time and time again, oftentimes when an issue gets advanced to my level, Bill, I've been trying to reach your staff, and I can't get a response. Sometimes people can't get a response from me that quickly. But feel free to reach out to me if that's not happening. But that's a goal for my staff, to be available and accessible.

We also need to be effective, and we need to be efficient. There is an awful lot of processes that I alluded to a moment ago that are in place, maybe because of our interpretation of the Civil Service system or interpretation of Illinois rules or regulations, that may be not necessary. And those are things that I'm examining. And again, I welcome your input if you're aware of specifics. One of the things that I'm concerned about, and I don't have specific examples. I hope you don't either. But I want to make sure that HR is a professional and personable experience. I'm hearing some positives, but I hear some negatives where, in difficult situations, our staff hasn't always been kind and supportive. Many times they have, but if you're aware of situations where you've not been treated professionally and personably, if we're the people side of the school and we're the facing, we're employee and applicant facing, we really need to be both professional and personable. So, again, let me know if you're aware of any other things that have happened.

One thing that I want to do, and this was even part of my interview process, was to identify how HR becomes a strategic partner to the campus. And that feels like so long ago, because there's been an awful lot of things where we're putting out fires and we're reacting and responding, and it's difficult to be strategic. But my goal, even this year, is to work with folks on a strategic basis to say, let's apply some critical thinking. What's the best way to solve this problem? How do we address this concern and do it in a proactive and effective way so we aren't continually reacting and responding, and the good of people is really recognized. So, that's something. Being a strategic partner is awfully important.

So, again, some of the things that I hope to accomplish this year – and I'll just go through a short list and then we'll have time for questions. I promise, I won't do the full hour and a half after all – is again to review all of our HRS policies to make sure that they've aligned with mission, vision and values. And there have been some policies that have been brought to my attention, specific things, I think one, very specifically, and maybe it doesn't affect you, or maybe it does. And this would be one for basically tuition waivers that we had set kind of an artificial number for the reimbursement being only 124 credit hours per four-year term. And it's like, well, where did that come from? That's not in the state legislature. It's not in any of our other guidelines. It was just something that was said. And it was harming individuals if they were part of a Bachelor of Science degree, if they were at a university where there was a different credit guidelines for that, so we changed that pretty quickly. So, again, please bring to my attention as I review these policies over the next year and say, yep, this is an issue, or this has affected me negatively. And maybe there's a reason for that, but please bring it to my attention.

One of the most important things I want to suggest – and I've said this senior roundtable – and I can't give you specifics, because we haven't laid it out yet, but I want to establish what I would call a compensation philosophy. With so many employees and faculty and staff, even student workers at times, there have been concerns or issues around salary. And we certainly have a reputation of not necessarily being the highest paid organization and not the highest paid in the state. And so I want to set some goals for us as to where do we want to be compensation-wise? How do we want to base our compensation? What's the link and the tie and the basis for that. So, again, feel free to reach out to me if you have specific thoughts. I bet everyone of you will have an idea, and that will be okay, but over the next several weeks, working with senior roundtable to establish a philosophy that we can use to follow.

One of the things that we're working right now to do is improving both our recruitment and our retention efforts. There certainly has been some sentiment across campus that we are seeing right now significant turnover that doesn't really play out in all the numbers. Our turnover now has been about 10 or 11 percent to date in the last year. We've had years where our turnover has been more like 14-15 percent. As I've shared with other groups, our turnover feels higher, because we're down probably about 700 positions over the last ten years. And so that makes it tougher. And then to be totally honest and transparent, that number of being down 700 positions feels bad, but it probably is the right thing to do just because our enrollment is down significantly as well. We can talk more about that separately. But have we changed the way that we work? Have we changed the systems that we use? And probably not significantly. So, losing the people that we have and having the vacancies that we have using the same processes and procedures and systems make it extra tough. And so we really feel the loss of turnover. Ten percent is a high number for higher ed. Of course, that's probably good for some businesses, but it's probably too high for us.

When we talk about retention, my goal is in the next year – and I might be able to use help from people in this room – is I'd like to start doing stay interviews. Has anybody ever heard of that before? A couple heads nodding. Stay interview is, basically, having a conversation with somebody. And it would be established questions, and you would identify, certainly, who you are. You would be as part of a committee or a group that's doing this. And you would gather information very much limited to the questions that you're asking. You wouldn't get into a lot of personal. It's essentially to help us find out in HR, and leadership to find out, what's keeping people here? It could be very blunt like, well, I need the benefits. Or I need the pay. Or I need this. Or I live in DeKalb and my family's [here]. It could be a number of different reasons. It could be a number of different reasons, but it would be great if we really understood that. Or if we end up having a conversation with somebody – and again, this is nobody that's expressed a desire to leave, it's just any one of us here – and you might find out that this person is really struggling and they're about ready to start looking for another job. So, is there a way we cannot be reactive, but be proactive with our faculty and staff here. That may be a program that I can implement this year called stay interviews. It doesn't have to be done by an HR individual, but you would, of course, having to maintain confidentiality should you conduct something like that. And again, I see it across the board. So, that would be one way to help educate.

Another tool that I want to use, and I've shared this with senior leadership, is that we've done a good job at assessing our climate here. Many of the different constituencies have done climate surveys that have gathered information from you and others that have been very helpful. But one thing that I want to introduce that I don't think we've ever done here. We did this at Indiana University. And that's what's called an engagement survey. And it's usually shorter and very specific about how you feel about your job. And certainly, if we've done research before, we know that what's most important is the work that you do. There could be lots of things that cause you to leave or be dissatisfied: pay, supervisor and things like that. But I really want to gather more data about understanding why people love it here or they struggle here. And an engagement survey will help us understand that. Is anybody familiar with looking at say Gallup or other organizations' engagement survey data? Is that something you've looked at? I'm likely going to partner with our College of Business to help us work through these things.

One thing that I've heard again and again has been the need for supervisor training and support. I think our supervisors are hungry for it; and we, actually, started this month. But we'll have a monthly basis where our supervisors are invited to a forum. And we'll use, not only topical things. We, of course, have talked about COVID, and we talked about remote work. But we'll be talking a little bit about things that are going to help that supervisor feel empowered and have the resources and the tools to be either you or a good supervisor of you. So, it certainly will be open to anybody who supervises staff.

One of the things, too, that I want to understand. We've seen this in HR, so if it's happening in HR, I fear it could be happening otherwise. And that's there are individuals who are in civil service – and that may not reflect too many of you here. But in civil service where we really don't know, or they don't know what their career path is. Or they're in a position that's somewhat limiting. And that's happened even in HR where we've hired a person, put them into a job and realized they're stuck. You can't apply for that assistant manager or manager or such-and-such. And I thought, well why did we do that? So, I want to have a better understanding of how to work with the civil service system so that we can see some career progression. That's really what, hopefully, keeps the person excited. And it gives you the desire to advance your career through additional education and support and training where you can see a path forward. And we've got some jobs – and I don't want to use the word, dead end – but they've been written as singular positions, and it doesn't always give you the ability to apply for what we would perceive as a higher-level position. So, that's something to expand. So, again, looking at personnel and professional development and career pathways.

Another tool that I want to use. I don't think we've done this much here, but I want to explore ways that we can do a better job at employee recognition and reward. And that could take the form of monetary. It could take the form of other forms of recognition. We have to look to see how our budget looks for the year, but those are things that I'm not aware that we do extensively. We certainly have service awards, and those are excellent to have, and I'm not taking anything away from that. But, in terms of recognition and reward that might be more performance-driven, I think this really would be something that we could benefit from. I think everybody would appreciate it.

So, those are just a few of my thoughts. I'm ending way early as you can tell. I want to open it up for any questions or thoughts, and I'll look for the exit if I need to run, you know, if the questions get too tough.

P. Chomentowski: Anyone have any questions?

E. Nesterov: Thank you for stopping by here and actually giving us a pretty good and deep sort of explanation of what the plans are. My question is about graduate students. That's really an issue, which is very dear to many faculty and is a significant part of the university. Graduate students typically don't get good benefits, particularly health insurance. I think they may get something for themselves, but they don't get anything for their family, like spouse, children. And this dramatically impacts our ability to recruit graduate students, because, obviously, when they look around and see what we offer compared to what other places offer, they see that we don't offer too much with respect to the benefits. So, are there any plans to look at this issue and see if things can be improved?

B. Hodson: You bring up a very good point, and thanks for sharing that. So, you heard his question, it really has to do with what are we going to do to recruit and retain graduate students. And a lot of that may have to do with benefits. The graduate student, obviously, isn't always the individual that just extends on after the bachelor's degree. They've maybe established a family or certainly have others involved in their life, and what do we do in regard to benefits. All I can mention is that that was the topic that we addressed at Indiana University, because many, many of our other Big Ten institutions and the east coast schools, we were seeing that graduate students were organizing representation specially for benefits. And sometimes it was just for dental insurance or just for medical insurance, things like that. It's certainly a huge topic. I'm not familiar enough with the rules within the state system. As you know, all of our health insurance goes directly through the state of Illinois. It's an excellent question that I hadn't pursued yet here. So, unlike other organizations, Indiana University and so forth, we could choose as an institution to say yes, we will provide this, and we will cost that out. It's a very interesting relationship with the state of Illinois to say you're an employee, you meet this threshold, you get the benefits. We don't have a lot of control in that sense. But I want to explore that, so that's a very good question. I'll find out where we can explore this, even check with some of our sister universities, ISU and U of I. I'm sure this has come up repeatedly for them. It's worth exploring and see what we could do to understand if they could be part of that. It could be as simple as X number of hours must be worked, but we'll see. We have taken – you bring up a good point about those sorts of things – we have taken the stance to partner with some of our other universities to push the system, not specifically SURS or others, but the state civil service system to expand coverage for recruitment of individuals from outside the state. Again, not specifically graduate students, but that's worth looking into. Thanks for bringing that up, and I will take a look at that. Good. Good question.

J. Jong: You mentioned some tools to employ an engagement survey at the university to identify some issues and some struggles. How would you use the [inaudible] if you used the [inaudible] to make sure employees' issues and perceptions can be [inaudible].

B. Hodson: If I understand your question, if you heard that, it was, when we use a tool such as a survey, how are we going to take action on it. And you're 100 percent correct. If we were to gather information and sit on it and say, well, that's nice, there's no reason for that employee to take that survey again. It's really critical that we take action. And so whatever tool we use, whether we develop it ourselves here at NIU or we buy one off the shelf from another organization, there will always be an action plan. And one of the actions oftentimes is to look toward the department or the work unit and say, our survey results from your work unit – and, of course, every individual's survey results would be blinded; no one could look at the survey and say, Sally completed the survey and she said bad things about her supervisor. There would be no way to do that. But we could identify areas where people are feeling engaged and, from the question, we would be able to determine: What is the supervisor's or the department chair's role in improving that engagement? And so, we would learn a lot about that, and we would identify areas that are doing well and not doing well. And a lot of times, it goes down to a supervisor or department chair that could make a difference. So, it not necessarily to put that person on the spot, but to provide the tools that they need. At other organizations, both Indiana University and Mayo Clinic, we met directly with the departments, so it was a cascading effect where we could say an entire division had very positive results, but maybe there were some particular departments that were targeted with concerns or issues. And we could target those specific departments and say here is where we need to apply or

help in improving things. And many times, I'm not generalizing, I don't mean to generalize, it would come to be specifics about how do we improve recognition for the employees? Is that where the issue is? Or is it a pay issue? Or is it a respect issue from the supervisor? So, there could be a number of different issues, and it may be different from department to department. But we would only conduct a survey if we know that we can have an action plan to follow through. And much of that would be very public. We would share that with the university so we could see that here are some strengths and maybe here are some weaknesses. We wouldn't identify individuals, but you would be able to say, wow, only 35 percent of the university employees are considered engaged, which means the remaining 60-some-odd percent are ready to walk out. And we would need to understand what the risks are. So, an engagement tool like that also talks about the risks, that if we don't make appropriate change. Did I answer your question? Okay, very good.

Other questions or thoughts?

P. Chomentowski: If there are no more questions, I'd like to say thank you, Bill, for coming out today. I really appreciate it. Bill Hodson. [applause]

- B. The Bob Lane Faculty Advocacy Award – call for nominations – Page 7
Submit written letters of nomination to Faculty Senate President Peter Chomentowski no later than noon Wednesday, Feb. 16.

P. Chomentowski: We're going to move to Item B under items for Faculty Senate to consider. On page 7 of your packet, there is the description of the Bob Lane Faculty Advocacy Award. And this is a call for nominations. If you would like to nominate someone, submit written letters of nomination to the Faculty Senate president, which is me no later than Wednesday, Feb. 16. So, if you have someone, send me an email with their nomination.

VIII. CONSENT AGENDA

- A. Approve the appointments of Therese Arado, College of Law, and Linda Saborío, Department of World Languages and Cultures, to serve on the NIU Ombudsperson Search Committee.

P. Chomentowski: Now we'll move on to the consent agenda. We're going to approve the appointments of Therese Arado from the College of Law and Linda Saborío from the Department of World Languages and Cultures to serve on the NIU Ombudsperson Search Committee, which is going to be underway in the next few months. Can I have a motion to approve the consent agenda and a second, please?

D. Collins: So moved.

P. Chomentowski: Second?

V. Collins: Second.

P. Chomentowski: We'll do a voice vote for this. All those in favor, say aye.

Members: Aye.

P. Chomentowski: All those opposed, say no. Any abstentions? All right, the consent agenda has passed.

IX. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

P. Chomentowski: We don't have any unfinished business.

X. NEW BUSINESS

- A. Proposed amendment to FS Bylaws:
Article 2, Officers of the Faculty Senate
Article 8, Personnel Review Responsibilities
Article 14, Faculty and SPS Personnel Advisor
Pages 8-12
FIRST READING
Peter Chomentowski, Faculty Senate President

P. Chomentowski: And we're on new business. The new business is we are going to have the proposed amendment to the Faculty Senate Bylaws for Article 2, Officers of the Faculty Senate, Article 8, Personnel Review Responsibilities, Article 14, Faculty and SPS Personnel Advisor, which is on pages 8 through 12. This is a new first reading.

Just to let you know, as you might remember, we brought this for a second reading of the proposed amendment changes to the Faculty Senate Bylaws regarding the roles of the faculty personnel advisor in November to Faculty Senate, and the motion failed. What we were looking at was changes of the roles and responsibilities due to the separation of the faculty personnel advisor. A little history: The faculty personnel advisor used to represent all employees of NIU and roughly in about 2017, they did a pilot study and proposed that there should be a faculty personnel advisor for faculty, supportive professional staff and operating staff. And so, the OS and SPS personnel advisor proposal was completed in spring of 2021, and it was passed at the October 6, 2021 University Council meeting.

The concern that we addressed at the November Faculty Senate meeting was in the opening statement of Article 14, and it was regarding the services of the faculty personnel advisor and who was available for the representation. Subsequently, we worked with Dr. Kerry Ferris, who is the United Faculty Alliance president representing NIU, and she suggested revised language, which has now been incorporated into the opening paragraph of Article 14. Those are the changes that we are having the first reading on. This updated proposal is now being brought forward to the Faculty Senate for a new first reading at this January 26, 2022 meeting. You can see the revised language on page 11 of your Faculty Senate packet.

Is there any discussion on the floor about the first reading of the new changes that we incorporated into the language?

D. Valentiner: I just wanted to thank you, Peter, for your persistence and communicating and working with the UFA, the faculty union, to work this out. I hope that we can do similar sorts of communication and coordination in the future.

P. Chomentowski: You're welcome, thank you. Any other discussion? All right, we'll bring this back for a second reading at the next meeting, and then we will have a vote on it.

XI. REPORTS FROM COUNCILS, BOARDS AND STANDING COMMITTEES

- A. Faculty Advisory Council to the IBHE – report
Linda Saborío, NIU representative to FAC-IBHE

P. Chomentowski: We will move now to reports from councils, boards and standing committees. The Faculty Advisory Council to the IBHE.

L. Saborío: Good afternoon, everyone. The FAC had its first meeting of this calendar year on January 21, and we're still meeting via zoom. We're looking to invite several guests to join us for the remainder of our meetings this year, including Eric Lichtenberger. Apparently, he's an enrollment expert on the IBHE. And Senator Scott Bennett, who is the chair of the Higher Education Committee. And Depute Governor for Education, Martin Torres. And maybe we could get Governor Pritzker to join us. The least we can do is send the invitation, right? Invite him to come.

For our legislative report, Jamie Ray mentioned one bill that might be of interest. It's HB 4361. This bill provides for a minimum salary for adjunct faculty or what we refer to here as the VAPs. Nice bill to take a look at, but it's just been proposed so we'll have to see what happens as it moves forward.

We also met with Ginger Ostro and Ja'Neane Minor, the chief of staff at the IBHE, and they gave us an update on the budget proposal from the IBHE. IBHE is requesting a seven percent increase in the higher education budget overall, with five percent being allocated based on criteria tied to the strategic plan, and a \$50 million increase in that funding. They hope to reappropriate all capital funding, which is good. I pass a bucket on the way up to the fourth floor of DuSable every time I go teach my course. I'm deciding to put some stickers on there so it's a little bit friendlier. It would be nice to have some continued support with capital funding. As a reminder, these budget recommendations are sent to both the governor and the general assembly, and they are recommendations only. It does not guarantee that the proposed increases will be approved by legislation. But it is nice to see the IBHE recognizes the importance and the need to support higher education. Ginger's budget presentation is available in its entirety on the [IBHE website](#). If you would like to take a look at that, please feel free to do so.

There is a Committee on Equitable Public University Funding that was recently formed and, from what I understand, they convened for the first time back in November. They're going to be proposing a new funding formula with recommendations that are due to be launched in July 2023. So, they have a whole year to figure this out, a little bit more than a year. President Freeman serves

on this, as well as Simón Weffer. I don't see him here. I don't know if you're interested. We may want to ask him to come and update us as they move forward with the items on that committee.

And finally, Pat recently posted for me a document if you're interested. It's titled Open Letter on the Mental Health Action on Campus Act. This is a paper that was approved by all FAC members as our December meeting, and it has been shared with the IBHE members for their, not really approval, we just want to see if they're on the same page with us or not, because we already did approve it. And then we plan to disburse the paper to our state legislators some time in early February. It's kind of a response to the Mental Health Action on Campus Act and some recommendations on how they can improve it.

That's all I have for today, and our next meeting is in February. Anybody have any questions? Someday I'll get a question, right? Thank you.

P. Chomentowski: Thank you, Linda.

- B. University Advisory Committee to the Board of Trustees – no report
Felicia Bohanon, Holly Nicholson, Peter Chomentowski
Katy Jaekel, Karen Whedbee, Greg Beyer

P. Chomentowski: We'll move on to the University Advisory Committee for the Board of Trustees. We have no report, but I wanted to let you know that next Board of Trustees meeting is February 10, and it's going to be the individual meetings, of course, from the Finance; Academic Affairs; Research, Innovation and Audit. And then there will also be a BOT special meeting at that same date on February 10.

- C. Faculty Rights and Responsibilities Committee – no report

P. Chomentowski: We'll move on to C, Faculty Rights and Responsibilities Committee. We have no report.

- D. FS/UC Rules, Governance and Elections Committee – report
Ben Creed, RGE/FS Liaison/Spokesperson

P. Chomentowski: Under the Rules, Governance and Elections Committee, we do have a report from Ben.

B. Creed: The Faculty Senate-University Council Rules, Governance and Elections Committee met on November 29, last year. At that meeting, we discussed a new charge given to the committee to discuss the creation of a cyberbullying website and then explore current policies to see if there is a need to update current policies or create new policies covering cyberbullying on campus or in the virtual space.

We had two on-campus experts on bullying come to speak to the group to give us an update on the current evidence and research around bullying, Michelle Demaray and David Gunkel. We discussed the campus stakeholders, which may be relevant as we engage in that work. And then we

established three working groups: cyberbullying resource development working group; a working group focused on collecting data across campus about what cyberbullying looks like on campus and the prevalence; and then a review of current policies working group to look at what's on the books to determine if what we have covers cyberbullying or if it needs to be expanded or modified going forward.

And our next meeting is tomorrow.

P. Chomentowski: Thank you, Ben.

E. Social Justice Committee – report
Ismael Montana, Chair

P. Chomentowski: We'll move on to the Social Justice Committee, Ismael?

I. Montana: Thank you, Peter. The last time I briefed Faculty Senate on the work of the Social Justice Committee, I reported on the five key recommendations that the committee had prioritized as its main focus of attention for this academic year, 2021-2022. Today I want to report that the Social Justice Committee's working groups, namely the institutional racism working group; diversity, equity and inclusion; and academic affairs working group, have all begun working internally and with a number of stakeholders to outline the steps, action plans, collect additional data and resources necessary to facilitate the implementation of these prioritized recommendations. The key part of this work in progress involves what we hope will remain a feature of the committee's working structure, and that is to continue to convene regular meetings with the university senior administration and leadership, leverage their support and secure their commitment to implement these recommendations.

Last October, the committee convened two such meetings. The first one, which included Provost Ingram and NIU Chief Diversity Officer Vernese Edghill-Walden, highlighted the work of the academic affairs working group chaired by my good friend, Ben Creed. This working group, as you may all know, is tasked with the implementation of two key recommendations. First, to procure the administration's commitment and support to ensure that the Social Justice Committee is adequately resourced so that the committee can carry out its charge. The formal request outlining how the administration can support this committee work has been forwarded to the provost, and she promised to get back to the committee very soon.

The academic affairs working group has also been doing some serious work on the committee's hallmark recommendations in equitable tenure and promotion policies by revising Faculty Senate Bylaws governing T&P process. And here we are referring specifically to Faculty Senate Bylaws, Article 9. And thanks to Ben's leadership on this front, this work is continuing methodically and very well.

The second meeting that was held to update the senior administration on the committee's work focused on two recommendations the institutional racism working group, chaired by Beth McGowan, is also undertaking. For this working group, one of the recommendations they are working on is to work with administration to recognize and dismantle the domains of the university

that produce traditional oppression and especially in the context of the president's goals calling for empowerment and shared responsibility to establish a five-year university-wide diversity, equity and inclusion plan.

This working group is also [inaudible] another work regarding decolonizing the curriculum by critically analyzing the underpinnings of carrying course offerings and including in our courses BIPOC scholars and artists and the like.

Plans are also underway to convene a third meeting with the university senior leadership. This has just been confirmed today and will take place by mid-February and will bring together the diversity, equity and inclusion working group with the senior administration and leadership.

Just a little over an hour ago, many of you might have seen in your email in box an email that came from Provost Ingram. In that email, she not only expressed her commitment as the executive vice president and provost to support the work of this committee, but it is also a call that she issued to NIU faculty and administration to support the work that this committee is doing along with many other groups, all in order to support the work of equity, diversity and inclusion. We think this is a very good signal and a good start that resulted from the effort that the three working groups, whose work I just outlined here.

The Social Justice Committee's next meeting is scheduled for February 9, and it is open to any member in this body who wishes to attend. So, that is what I have. In the light of the [inaudible] that is happening, I just want to take the opportunity again and thank the committee members and especially the chairs engendering that work for moving this work forward. So, thank you. If there are any questions, I am happy to take some. Yes, go ahead.

L. Saborío: Just more of a comment, Ismael. Is one of your groups looking at course evaluation of faculty by students?

I. Montana: Course evaluation?

L. Saborío: Yes, are you looking at faculty evaluation. What was it you said in your email, was it – no? Did I read that incorrectly?

I. Montana: Not specifically that I am aware of.

L. Saborío: I thought there was something to do with looking at how faculty are evaluated.

I. Montana: If it is evaluation with respect to tenure and promotion, then that is something that, yes, one of the working groups is.

L. Saborío: And included in that then, will they be looking at course evaluations, like how faculty are evaluated by students in their courses. I just mention this, because, if you're interested in looking, the public caucus of the FAC, we just collected samples of course evaluations that are used by different public universities in the state of Illinois, if you want to take a look at those.

I. Montana: Oh, absolutely.

L. Saborío: As we know, there's a lot of bias.

I. Montana: The working groups are still in the process of working with stakeholders, collecting additional data and also both within NIU and outside NIU. And we are looking at a lot of different kind of models. And some of those models – I don't want to get too much into specifics – but when you get into specifics, you begin to see how tenure and promotion are being evaluated. So, teaching is definitely one dimension of that.

L. Saborío: Absolutely. All right, I'll pass those forward to you then. Okay, thank you.

I. Montana: I appreciate it, thank you.

P. Chomentowski: Thank you, Ismael.

F. Student Government Association – report
Devlin Collins, President
Dallas Douglass, Speaker of the Senate

P. Chomentowski: We'll move on to Student Government Association, Devlin.

D. Collins: Good afternoon, everyone. We got off to a rough start with spring semester and classes going virtual, but it's good to see everyone back in a physical location again. So, SGA has been working hard on two fronts, and I'm going to just go on as saying internal with here on campus and external outside of campus.

Internally, a few things have been happening. One major concern that SGA has been noticing is that there has been a trend of falling student academic success among our student leaders. We really notice that a majority of student leaders on campus across all of our student organizations saw a decrease in their overall GPAs between last semester and this semester. And it is a cause for concern as some of these people have fallen below the required amount to go for these officer positions in student government. So, a lot of these student organizations are essentially losing their leadership structure. One of the things that we'll be working on over the semester is trying to provide more of an academic experience to our students and also try to plug these students with services and offices across campus so we can try and better support our students, graduate and non-traditional and undergraduate. We've been seeing it all across the board.

Another thing is over the course of the fall semester, we've had a handful of graduates and non-traditional students come in and talk to the Student Government Association about the fact that they believe that there are inadequate benefits and resources available to the community, specifically citing that there is no known student support group or office for their needs. Now, while it's unknown to me whether or not there is an official graduate student association or graduate student office, we do want to make sure that this service is provided to students in the future moving forward. So, over the course of this semester, we will be discussing with graduate students, non-traditional students, military students, all of these different populations to ensure their needs are

met over the course of this semester as we are trying our hardest to avoid another slip in academic success amongst our students in the coming year.

Externally, we are working on a few larger initiatives that will also help support some of our internal initiatives. One of the things that we, actually, reported on last semester was we joined onto the Double the Pell Grant Initiative with Dr. Freeman and our federal affairs office. Now, over the course of winter break, though, NIU's SGA has assisted in growing a national coalition with the task of following up with the Double the Pell Grant and also following a few other initiatives. This national coalition has grown to include the students of the state of California, the state of New York, the state of Washington, the associated students in the State of Minnesota and also smaller student organizations within the Midwest region. So, this is including Illinois, Indiana, North Dakota, South Dakota and a few other states. Right now, NIU is actually leading the Illinois chapter of this coalition as we are trying to grow it toward the MAC conference, I State, U of I and other universities to join on to our Double the Pell Grant Initiative. And we're also looking to support initiatives such as better student pay on campus and other services to bring to the campus, such as textbook exchange networks or other forms of communication that our students can really use and help reduce the cost of their education. We've been in discussion all winter break. This is something that has been needed, not just at NIU, but students across the Midwest and across the southern states have been begging for more benefits, more services, just to help them out, whether it's because they're confused about what's happening on campus or because the university, itself, does not have those resources. We are really looking to expand, not just what's going on here, but also help out at other institutions.

One other thing that we are working on internally is that we know that last week we were all virtual with our classes, and we saw a huge influx of students complaining that online learning was not what they wanted to do. A lot of students were very adamant about not going to classes last week, and a lot of them really tried their hardest to stay at home, whether in Chicago or some other place in Illinois, and try to avoid coming back to campus, because a lot of them pretty much guessed that we were just going to stay virtual for most of the semester. So, one of the things that SGA will be cracking down on this semester is actually we will be helping the university reenforce the Protect the Pack plan. And we are looking forward to better enforcing these COVID protections in place. We don't want the campus to lock back up and go back to virtual learning. We're very aware that there are some instructors that do not want to partake in virtual learning. So, we really want to avoid any further incidents or any further miscommunications this semester.

That's the main initiatives we're working on.

P. Chomentowski: Thank you very much.

- G. Operating Staff Council – report
Natasha Johnson, Representative
Zac Birch, Representative

P. Chomentowski: Operating Staff Council, Natasha.

N. Johnson: Hi everybody. The OSC is working with HR. Pretty much everything that Bill said is exactly what we're working on. We're working with HR to figure out what we can do to keep staff and figure out a way to adjust the pay for the positions that are significantly underpaid based on the benchmarking that they did with other Illinois institutions. We're looking to get supervisors training on how desk audits work and provide additional training to understand how additional pay forms work. Then we just had a meeting today and now we just found out that, over the last two years and eight months, the APAC has been down on employees for a total of 29 percent of their workers are now gone, which is the office series. Our hopes are that we can work successfully together with HR to come up with some strategic plans that will allow us to keep more of our employees and our coworkers and, hopefully, prevent our institution from losing expertise in specific areas around the campus. But in the meantime, figure out a way to get additional pay forms for the employees that are doing two, three and four positions since they're significantly down on employees. That's pretty much what we're working on. Everybody that's contacting the president, which is Holly Nicholson, and anybody who's on the OSC, everybody's concerned with the amount of work that they're doing, that they're working significantly past hours. And if your salary – it is what it is – so we're just looking for ways that we won't lose more employees and figuring out a way and finding funding to be able to pay them. Thank you.

P. Chomentowski: Thank you, Natasha.

- H. Supportive Professional Staff Council – no report
Felicia Bohanon, President
Stephanie Richter, Representative

P. Chomentowski: For the Supportive Professional Staff, we don't have a report for today.

XII. INFORMATION ITEMS

- A. [Policy Library](#) – Comment on Proposed Policies (right-hand column on web page)
- B. [Minutes](#), Academic Planning Council
- C. [Minutes](#), Athletic Board
- D. [Minutes](#), Baccalaureate Council
- E. [Minutes](#), Board of Trustees
- F. [Minutes](#), Campus Security and Environmental Quality Committee
- G. [Minutes](#), Comm. on the Improvement of the Undergraduate Academic Experience
- H. [Minutes](#), General Education Committee
- I. [Minutes](#), Graduate Council
- J. [Minutes](#), Honors Committee
- K. [Minutes](#), Operating Staff Council
- L. [Minutes](#), Supportive Professional Staff Council

- M. [Minutes](#), University Assessment Panel
- N. [Minutes](#), University Benefits Committee
- O. [Minutes](#), Univ. Comm. on Advanced and Nonteaching Educator License Programs
- P. [Minutes](#), University Committee on Initial Educator Licensure
- Q. FS meets monthly on Wednesdays, 3 p.m.
Spring 2022 meeting dates: Jan 26, Feb 23, Mar 30, Apr 27.

P. Chomentowski: Last thing, I'm just going to highlight the dates. Our next meetings will be February 23, March 30 and April 27, for the Faculty Senate meetings. And they'll be held here in this room for the rest of the semester. So, please note your calendars.

XIII. ADJOURNMENT

P. Chomentowski: I will take a motion and a second to adjourn the meeting today.

D. Valentiner: So moved.

B. Creed: Second.

P. Chomentowski: All those in favor, please say aye.

Members: Aye.

P. Chomentowski: All those opposed, say no. Any abstentions? All right. The Faculty Senate meeting for today is adjourned.

Meeting adjourned at 4:05 p.m.