

Operating Staff Council
October Regular Meeting Minutes
Hybrid Meeting – Illinois Room
October 7, 2021, 9:00 a.m.
Approved November 4, 2021

Members Present: Zac Birch, Angie Gutierrez-Vargas, Sandy Jakubiak, Natasha Johnson, Cindy Kozumplik, Frances Mitchell (Administrative Aide), Jay Monteiro, Kathy Mosher, Holly Nicholson, David Rapp, Sara Richter, Jeffry Royce, Mary Schlagel, Jim Slagstad, Lauren Teso-Warner, Tracey Ward, Linda Yates

Guests: John Barnett, Felicia Bohanon, Renata Catlett, Peter Chomentowski, Christopher Gilbert, Merlynette Griffin, Liz Guess, John Hulseberg, Meg Junk, Caroline Kosmel, Pulchratia Lacey, Patricia Liberty-Baczek, Mark Pietrowski, Miriah Ranken, JS, Debbie Williams

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XIII. Adjournment

I. Call to Order

Nicholson called the October regular meeting of the Operating Staff Council (OSC) to order at 9:00 a.m. and began recording the meeting.

II. Roll Call

Attendance recorded by Teams report.

III. Approval of Agenda

Teso-Warner moved to accept the agenda, seconded by Yates; passed by unanimous vote.

IV. Approval of September 2, 2021, Minutes

Schlagel moved to accept the September 2, 2021, minutes seconded by Birch; passed by unanimous vote.

V. Treasurer's Report

Yates reported, noting the addition of the Civil Service Emergency Fund to the report along with the regularly reported Endowed Scholarship Fund. For the Civil Service Emergency Fund, the balance is \$765 and does not reflect the \$100 donation received from Local 1890. President Angie Gasero and VP Rave Meyer reached out and donated that. Yates also again addressed the issue of the Foundation's standard 15% maintenance fee. Yates explained the committee weighed the benefits vs the cost. The benefits of being included in the Foundation's fund-raising campaigns, space on their website and the services they render (tax accounting, sending people documents, receipts and free printing) may outweigh the cost. Still, Yates has no problem requesting a reduction or a waiver of the fee because this money is going to civil service employees. Kozumplik moved to approve the Treasurer's Report, seconded by Hulseberg, no discussion. The motion passed by majority vote.

VI. Visiting Committees/Guests: None.

VII. Public Comment: None.

VIII. Announcements/Correspondence

A. Operating Staff Council Vacancies – Royce reported the following departures from the council: Rebekka Ayres; Evan Forbes and himself. Vice President Royce made the following remarks:

- **Rebekka Ayres** served on this council several years across a number of roles at NIU. Rebekka was highly active in our sub-committees, most notably so with our PR events and newsletter work. Anyone who knows Rebekka would agree that she is unmatched in courtesy and personal connection. I once told her I was celebrating my cat's adoption anniversary over the weekend. And I'll be darned, the following year on the exact same day there was a card on my desk celebrating that very same event. With the name, breed, dates, everything! She will be sorely missed.

- **Evan Forbes:** Evan’s time on the council was brief, but he was active and helpful with our legislative efforts prior to joining the council. I know he would have continued to make an exceptional secretary if only this institution could figure out how to retain talented people. Evan would frequently barge into my office with a new problem and would absolutely refuse to leave until we mapped out every detail and solution on my whiteboard. He challenged me and others regularly to think critically, communicate clearly and refuse to accept lip-service as a response. NIU will feel his loss operationally for a long time. Say ”hi” to Evan if you ever see him at the Egyptian Theatre, which is where he accepted a new role as Technical Director.
- **Jeffry Royce:** I have accepted a position down at the University of Illinois, at Urbana-Champaign, beginning November 1, so I will continue to work here at NIU through the end of October. I gave public comments yesterday at University Council addressing several concerns I have observed over the years, and that I think are chronic to the campus. I was so busy writing about Rebekka and Evan and doing everything else for the meeting, so I apologize, but I can at least [send along my remarks to all of you](#) if you didn’t get the chance to hear them. Even if they get it wrong in the transcript, I still think it’s an important message and you would be more than welcome to save it, copy it, send it, speak it, add to it at every scheduled public comment time at every University Council meeting until there are some solutions to these problems.
- **Vacancies:** We have three members leaving and we have three alternates. Rebekka was the first to leave, September 20; Evan Forbes resigned October 1 and Jeffry Royce is resigning October 28, 2021. The alternates who will move to representatives will not be starting new three-year terms, they will be completing the term of the representative they replace. [Ayres’ term expires 6/30/2022; Forbes’ term expires 6/30/2024; Royce’s term expires 6/30/2022.]
- **Kozumplik reminded** everyone that the Ethics and Cyber Security Training is underway and runs until November 5.

B. President’s Report – Holly Nicholson

Nicholson echoed Royce’s sentiment about Rebekka and Evan and expressed her appreciation for Royce’s writing them out. Nicholson also expressed how tough it is going to be without Royce. *“He’s passionate, he’s an advocate, he’s a leader, he’s fearless, and he stands up for what he believes in.”* Jeffry keeps us laughing and that he pushes me to be louder and bolder.” Nicholson expressed her appreciation for Royce’s encouragement and contributions and hopes Royce will stay in touch. Hulseberg also read [prepared comments](#).

President Nicholson’s good news was that the Personnel Advisor position was unanimously approved into the official bylaws of the University Council. She noted that Hulseberg has been piloting the position for six years and has helped hundreds of employees and has done an outstanding job. Nicholson expressed gratitude that Hulseberg was willing to keep this pilot going.

Nicholson, Royce, Operating Staff Personnel Advisor Hulseberg, and Workplace Guidance Committee Chair Yates, met with Bill Hodson. They reported back that *“Bill came to listen--he*

was thoughtful, receptive to everything we said, and he initiated a follow-up meeting because half an hour was not enough time; he recognized that and invited us back.”

At the meeting with Hodson, OSC representatives talked about the positives of OSC’s relationship with HR, and the good things HR has done. They also reported discussing how too many good people were leaving the university; position reviews, job descriptions, the reimagining human resources report, supervisor training, career development, staffing levels, additional pay, transparency, and work from home policy. OSC representatives suggested forming a group from across campus to work together as partners on a regular basis to try solving some of these issues.

The executive committee met with the civil service system auditor which was a less positive meeting. They discovered that merit increases, rate of pay and years within classifications and the existence or not of merit pay is not up to the system office. ***Those are campus responsibilities.***

C. Council Spotlight

- i. [John Hulseberg](#)
- ii. [Rebekka Ayres](#)

D. Human Resource Services Update – Pulchratia Lacey

Lacey reported the Civil Service Audit took place last week. HR is working on some of the concerns that were brought up. Greg Brady is the NIU designated employee representative with the system office. Brady is NIU’s official liaison. Lacey did not know when the draft audit report will be available. Once it is on the HR website and Lacey has it, OSC will be notified so we can look at it.

HR is experiencing vacancies like everywhere else on campus. Back in May, there were five employment coordinators and an assistant manager for that area. As of tomorrow, there will be two employment coordinators for the entire campus. Lacey reported they are doing the best they can to keep afloat.

HR is also in the process of making some planned revisions because of Audrey Southard’s report. They are seriously working on moving towards a talent acquisition function and implementing that. You will see some changes coming to HR that will allow them to better balance the workloads of their staff and meet the needs of the campus. They now have three assistant HR manager vacancies posted on the HR website and soon there will be announcements about NIU hiring in general throughout town or campus. They are looking to put ads on buses. Overall, they are struggling to get their positions filled, so you’ll be seeing more outreach from HR about hiring in general.

They are also changing the focus of the Service Center to be more customer service focused and get basic questions answered at the front desk.

IX. Shared Governance Reports

A. Board of Trustees: Peter Chomentowski

The Board of Trustees met last week. Agenda action items were brought to the board for consideration, discussed and approved. The four action items approved were a new program for Bachelor of Science in Applied Management; telephone replacement; upgrade to inside wireless network and building access control upgrades. Chomentowski added that if you have any questions, the [report is up on the website](#) where the actual dollar amounts for the action items are published, i.e. headphones for everyone at \$100 each. Look for the minutes for the September 23, 2021.

B. Faculty Senate: Peter Chomentowski

Lisa Freeman discussed university goals of specific interest to faculty. If you are interested, the entire report will be presented at the December 7, 2021, BOT meeting.

C. Supportive Professional Staff Council: Felicia Bohanon

The SPSC has been working on a Campus Climate Survey and anticipate having that by the end of November. That survey will drive their work for this year and the initiatives coming from other supportive professional staff. The SPSC spent their last meeting finalizing committees and officers. They also navigated their first hybrid meeting that went relatively well.

Relative to University Council presentations, a lot of the concerns that both Nicholson and Royce shared are the same concerns SPSC shares, which is expected will be revealed by the Campus Climate Survey, particularly in terms of individuals having to take on more work with fewer workers—the number of individuals leaving and then just in general terms of staff morale. SPS employees share a lot of the same concerns as operating staff employees.

D. Student Government Association (SGA) No report.

E. University Council: Peter Chomentowski

President Freeman gave her report about university goals as they applied to the group present at University Council, so it was less about academic interests and more about administrative and operational interests. As stated earlier, the entire report will be presented at the December 7, 2021, BOT meeting.

X. Operating Staff Council Committee Reports

A. Elections and Appointments Committee: Jeffrey Royce

Royce began by calling for a vote for a new secretary to replace Evan Forbes. Candidates who have accepted their nomination to be considered today for secretary are: Sandy Jakubiak, Zac Birch, Kathy Mosher and Rave Meyer. Jay Monteiro, Tracey Ward and Angie Gutierrez-Vargas declined. Votes were taken via Chat and Zac Birch is the new secretary-elect. Frances Mitchell will follow up with Zac.

We have a seat for the Campus Parking Committee to consider today. Vicki Wronkowski indicated her interest in the Campus Parking Committee. Royce reviewed Wronkowski's committee interest form, reading pertinent parts aloud. Royce asked for a motion to approve Wronkowski to serve on the Campus Parking Committee. Birch so moved, seconded by Kozumplik. Wronkowski was appointed by majority vote.

The next seat to fill is on the Campus Security and Environmental Quality Committee. Alan Smith submitted a committee interest form. Royce read aloud the pertinent parts of the application. This seat is for a one year, completing Nancy Skelley's term. Royce asked for a motion to approve Smith's appointment to the Campus Security and Environmental Quality Committee. Gutierrez-Vargas so moved, seconded by Mosher. Smith was appointed by majority vote.

The next item for consideration and consent is the approval of Liz Guess as the SURS-MAC joint representative for the Operating Staff Council and the Supportive Professional Staff Council. The next approval will come from the SPS Council.

[There was a question as to whether Liz Guess will be reporting to the OSC since she is holding a joint appointment].

Monteiro noted only one more person is needed for the Student Grievance Committee and suggested taking a volunteer now. Jim Slagstad volunteered. Other volunteers were Jakubiak and Kozumplik; Miriah Ranken volunteered if needed. Several other names appeared so Royce asked everyone interested to put a note of their interest in the chat.

The next appointment was for the Parking Appeals Committee. Jakubiak volunteered. Royce asked any others interested to note their interest in the chat.

Royce also mentioned his leaving the Student Conduct Board so there will be a vacancy there. Anyone interested was asked to put a note in the chat. Kozumplik noticed that Gutierrez-Vargas was interested in the Student Conduct Board.

B. Legislative Committee: Holly Nicholson

The proposal regarding [Article 7](#) is up for a second reading. Nicholson asked if everyone had a chance to review the document. Hearing no response, Nicholson asked for a motion to approve Article 7 amendments. Richter so moved, seconded by Johnson. The motion passed by majority vote.

Next was a first reading of [Article 8](#): Referendum. The only thing being recommended is changing 8.4 by inserting *If applicable* to the beginning of the first sentence so 8.4 reads as follows:

“If applicable the OSC shall conduct the referendum vote by distributing ballots to status civil service employees within thirty days of the OSC meeting at which the petition was presented.”

The next recommendation from the Legislative Committee is a first reading of [Article 1](#): Officers – Powers and duties. Nicholson reviewed the numerous proposed changes, and asked members to email her their comments. Nicholson plans to put out a new document before the next meeting on November 4.

- C. Public Relations/Activities Committee:** Monteiro reported first about the Confessions of a Rookie section of the newsletter. The committee discussed ways to ramp up the information received from people who are responding. The committee decided to review the list of 25 questions they send to rookies. The committee is now asking OSC members to help with nominations--giving names of people thought to be potential interviewees. If you think of people who would be good to interview, please send names to Rave Meyer, rmeyer@niu.edu

The committee is discussing other submissions for the newsletter and asking people what they may have to share about their work. The committee is considering another bowling night as well as a high-tech scavenger hunt (geocacher) that uses GPS to locate hidden containers with various contents. Also, under consideration is setting up Teams presentations on various subjects, so we are looking for topics to present. Send your ideas to the committee, c/o ksmith12@niu.edu

Karen Smith reported her office is looking at resuming the Wellness Fair. Smith reported they will need to reduce the number of vendors due to COVID restrictions. The PR committee is going to work with EAP to do a survey of our constituents to see what type of vendors they would like to see.

D. Workplace Guidance Committee: Linda Yates

This committee has been working for months to address the APAC letter presented by Mariah Ranken and her colleagues about the documented 27% decrease in the number of office personnel. Over the past 20 months or so they have been brainstorming and working with APAC and Human Resource Services. Royce has taken a lot of time to polish a document and the idea is that we do not want to continue to lose passionate, talented people at NIU. We want to have a process instead of just letting things go on until people are burnt out.

The committee envisions a workflow, a process that would be driven by HRS which would be triggered whenever a position is vacated and (there is a formula) within two weeks. The supervisor would inform HRS about how the position duties will be distributed moving forward. If a duty is assigned to another staff member permanently, additional pay would be requested. Timing is critical and the idea is to describe which duties are being removed to preserve workload balance and indicate to whom the removed duties would go; if no duties are being removed, a request for an appropriate pay increase would be made.

Also discussed at this time was when Local 1890 employees will be getting their 3% raise. The raise did come through on October 15 pay and was retroactive. Individuals need to go to MyNIU, Human Resource Services to view the increment notice which is not being sent out on paper. Yates also mentioned an additional increase was made for lower paid employees.

E. Administrative Professionals Advisory Council (APAC)

Ranken reported, thanking the council for everything that they are doing to act on the letter that was proposed. It may seem like forever, but there has been a lot of work done already and a lot more work to be done. APAC appreciates this council's collaboration.

F. Employee Advisory Committee (EAC): No report

G. Civil Service Emergency Fund

Yates reported the committee met and discussed the 15% fee charged by the Foundation against every donation. Yates reported we are getting \$85 out of a \$100 donation. Yates did not have a problem asking for a waiver or reduction due to the nature of the fund.

Yates also reported the fund is gaining on their threshold requirement of \$2500 before making any awards. They are developing a rubric for determining and documenting awards. The committee is continuing to brainstorm on how to fundraise. They have received some nice fliers and a sign from Creative Services which was used at Corn Fest. Yates reported the committee would like to do another booth, so please send us your ideas. If you are having an event where you think our presence would be appropriate, please let us know. The committee is also planning to approach other potential donors such as local businesses where we could give them something to place in their window or on their door to show their support for NIU.

XI. Prior Business

A. Council of Councils: Nicholson reported that she has not received any information about this year's Council of Councils, nor has Hulseberg, so they are assuming it is not happening, at least not as scheduled. They expressed interest in hosting the event at NIU again, considering their previous success.

XII. New Business

A. November OSC Meeting: Nicholson called for a vote on whether we continue with hybrid meetings or have them all virtual. Royce suggested this meeting not be counted as virtual because there was insufficient time to get properly set up. Royce suggested we try hybrid in November. There were no conflicting opinions; Royce moved that we have a hybrid meeting in November, seconded by Teso-Warner. The motion passed with a majority vote. November's meeting will be hybrid.

XIII. Adjournment

Royce moved to adjourn, seconded by Birch, all in favor, the meeting adjourned at 10:46 a.m.

Respectfully Submitted,
Frances Mitchell
Administrative Aide