

**Operating Staff Council
Regular February Meeting**

Hybrid Meeting: virtual on Teams and in-person in Altgeld 125
February 3, 2022, 9 a.m.

Approved March 3, 2022

- I. Call to Order – Holly Nicholson
 - A. Call to Order: 9:01AM

- II. Roll Call – Frances Mitchell/Zac Birch
 - A. Present: Gutierrez-Vargas, Kozumplik, Slagstad, Richter, Ward, Nicholson, Mosher, Yates, Johnson, Jakubiak, Rapp, Monteiro, Meyer, Birch, Schlagel, Hoffmann, Shirley
 - B. Not Present: Gingrich, Teso-Warner, O’Brien
 - C. Guests: Lisa Freeman, Matt Streb, Caroline Kosmel, John Hulseberg, Debbie Williams, Miriah Rankin, Felicia Bonahon, James Garman, Liz Guess, Mark Pietrowski, Merlynette Griffin, Patricia Erickson, Peter Chomentowski, Renata Catlett

- III. Approval of Agenda
 - A. Motioned by Meyer. Second by Kozumplik. Agenda is approved.

- IV. Approval of Minutes of January 6, 2022 OSC Meeting
 - A. Birch had updated minutes.
 - B. Hulseberg: The complaint that was talked about last month was filed with the Office of the Executive Inspector General (OEIG), not the Illinois Attorney General (IL AG).
 - C. Motion to approve minutes by Mosher. Seconded by Meyer. Minutes are approved.

- V. Treasurer’s Report
 - A. See attached report
 - B. Ward moves. Kozumplik second. Report is approved.

- VI. Visiting Committees/Guests
 - A. President Freeman
 - i. What is the possibility for ice skating on the east lagoon?
 - 1. No plans, but there is a rink at the rec center; may consider it for the future
 - ii. What is the future of enrollment at NIU?
 - 1. Enrollment is how successful we are at recruiting and retaining students
 - 2. Put into place the Strategic Enrollment Management plan (SEM) in 2019. Implemented new enrollment goals.
 - 3. Prior to pandemic, we were improving, especially with at-risk students
 - 4. COVID changed the recruitment and retention
 - 5. Students are struggling on multiple levels, especially with retentions—biggest declines in underrepresented students and at-risk students
 - 6. Sending thanks to Operating Staff who helped keep students in school
 - 7. Future students will be experiencing pandemic-related trauma.
 - 8. In March an updated SEM plan will be released with updates focusing on retention and student support services
 - iii. How are we aligning our workforce with the changing nature of NIU?
 - 1. Need to be aligned with the needs and preferences of students

2. Consider the needs and preferences of NIU staff
3. Looking to finalize Remote Work policy and administrative efficiency project
4. Bill Hodson is working to update HR policies and developing plans for working with supervisors and training
- iv. Compensation
 1. NIU is working to implement strategies to address pay inequities
 2. Data informed decision and providing voice to all members of the students
 3. Governor's budget address—looking to add about 5% to this year's budget and be funded at the same level for next year
 4. Bond rating from Moody's—moved to positive from stable
- v. There is a lot of talk about transparency, but it is hard to find budgets and data. Policy library is not fully accurate to what we are currently doing. What is the plan to provide more information to employees below the director level?
 1. Budget information should be found in the minutes of the Board of Trustees—quarterly updates; detailed descriptions of debt consolidation; posted on their website
 2. Everyone is aware of the policy library inaccuracies. It came out of shared governance. It is supposed to be updated on a cycle. HR is currently reviewing these policies and updating them.
 3. Have an initiative on how we are planning for budgets. IT is always a challenge to get communication out—we try to be transparent (email, websites, shared governance). It is a struggle to get information to people in a way that is digestible.
- vi. There have been major reductions in the workforce, especially in Administrative Professionals—down 29%. However, Bill Hodson's comments about NIU employees being entitled was not well received at the January OSC meeting.
 1. Hodson wants to make NIU a better place. All universities and workplaces are having a hard time.
 2. We recognize that the pain is not just ours, but that fact does not make it better.
 3. Employees are not going to wait forever to solve the issues that are being raised
- vii. Lack of personnel in key places around the university has slowed things down. This has created resentment between units. Given the fact that many units are critically understaffed, what kind of additional layer of transparency could be used to redistribute workloads?
 1. NIU units must stop assuming that we can do everything and have to stop doing some things.
 2. Lack of empathy is a major issue.
 3. We're tired and frustrated and trying to care. We take it on ourselves and start to blame others. This leads to disengagement with others.
 4. Need to think about the mental health and wellbeing of the employees
 5. Streb: Employees should talk to people who you need to talk to. NIU also needs to look to being more efficient — example of COVID response becoming more streamlined.
- viii. What is the administration doing to support the Pell Grant expansion?
 1. Been working to double Pell. Feel that the four-year experience will further the building of future leaders and help students complete their degrees more quickly
- ix. If we are speaking to the right people and nothing happens, and if we are speaking out and nothing happens, how do we create change?
 1. Streb: supervisors should be listening as it is part of their jobs. We have talked about having supervisor training and this is a part of it

- 2. Freeman: There are ways to use your voice that are less risky—personnel advisor, anonymous suggestion box. Additionally, retaliation is often spoken about, but examples are not specifically shared.
- x. SHIELD COVID sites are down today. How does this affect those employees who are only on campus today? Are they exempted this week?
 - 1. Streb: frustrated with the communications from SHIELD. It will be exempted this week
- xi. Administrative professionals have been reduced by 29% to date over the last year.

VII. Public Comments

- A. Hulseberg: Shout out to the grounds workers for the snow removal. Thanks to the plumbers who are working with the frozen/busted pipes in the freezing weather.

VIII. Announcements/Correspondence

- A. President's Report – Holly Nicholson
 - i. Met with President Freeman last week
 - ii. UAC is this afternoon
 - iii. UC was cancelled
- B. Council Spotlight – Katie Stoddard
 - i. N/A
- C. Human Resource Services Update
 - i. N/A

IX. Shared Governance Reports

- A. [Board of Trustees](#)
 - i. More updates next month
- B. [Faculty Senate](#)
 - i. Bill Hodson spoke
 - ii. Appointed two people to the Ombudsperson search
 - iii. SGA had a lot of students contact them because they did not want to attend virtual classes
 - 1. If we have students who are disengaging, please reach out to Holly with ideas
 - 2. What was the concern? Was it that it would go longer than one week?
 - 3. Financial aid is impacted
 - 4. Hybrid options are good to have and having technology in the classroom is important
 - 5. It could be a more complex relationship between students and their willingness to engage with online learning
- C. [Supportive Professional Staff Council \(SPSC\)](#)
 - i. Will have an SPS Personnel Advisor hired within the next week
 - ii. Campus climate survey was put out and the analysis will be completed in the next month or so
 - iii. SPS sabbatical—it is not possible for SPS employees to take the time for a sabbatical; looking at ways to create some change in this policy.
- D. [Student Government Association \(SGA\)](#)
 - i. SGA said that this is not a good meeting time for them this semester
 - ii. Want to ask about getting more N95 masks for students. They can get more at the various points on campus.
- E. [University Council](#)
 - i. N/A

X. Operating Staff Council Committee Reports

A. Elections and Appointments Committee

- i. Hulseberg and Slagstad have indicated they want to be on the Ombudsperson search
 1. Hulseberg gave rationale; Slagstad retracted his interest
 2. Hulseberg has been appointed
- ii. Four people are interested in serving on the University Benefits:
 1. Birch, Richter, Slagstad, & Teso-Warner gave statements or had their application read
 2. Slagstad was appointed.

B. Legislative Committee

- i. Been working on the ethics statement.
- ii. Going to the executive committee.

C. Public Relations/Activities Committee

- i. Newsletter is nearly ready to go to the Clearinghouse.
- ii. OS Dependent Scholarships are being reviewed

D. Workplace Guidance Committee

- i. Met on January 26
- ii. How are we going to rectify the Administrative Professional issues of reduction in staff?
 1. Creating a concrete plan
- iii. Yates and Nicholson do not feel comfortable asking for more administrative closure days on behalf of OSC

E. [Administrative Professionals Advisory Council \(APAC\)](#)

- i. Talking about reduction in staff
- ii. Administrative Professional Breakfast—checking with members if they prefer in-person or virtual (April 26)

F. [Employee Advisory Committee \(EAC\)](#)

- i. Met last week
- ii. Merit board has asked to amend the Civil Service Act to allow people who do not live in the state to enter the Civil Service System
- iii. Merit-based raises; the Civil Service System is failing at this
 1. Going to work with HR departments to redesign
- iv. Northeastern is going to host Council of Councils in October

G. [Civil Service Emergency Fund](#)

- i. Met on January 14
- ii. Going to start awarding now.
 1. We have nine people waiting
 2. Going to award two grants next week
 3. Award two more in March

H. Council of Councils Ad Hoc Committee

- i. Met and discussed where we go from here
- ii. Have asked for the 2023 event (in-person)
- iii. Next meeting is February 23
- iv. Johnson: try to get some things on this year's budget

XI. Prior Business

- A. N/A

XII. New Business

- A. N/A

XIII. Adjournment

A. Meyer motions. Monteiro seconds. Meeting ends at 10:43AM.