

North Dakota University System Staff Senate Meeting June 16, 2010 Meeting Minutes

The North Dakota University System Staff Senate met on June 16, 2010 at North Dakota State University.

Schools present: Bismarck State College (BSC) represented by Jackie Hagel, Rita Nodland, and Bonnie Wiesz; Dickinson State University (DSU) represented by Christie Chernich; Lake Region State College (LRSC) represented by Cindy Rerick; Mayville State University (MaSU) represented by Jay Henrickson and Cindy Ingebretson; Minot State University (MiSU) represented by Nathan Anderson, Linda Benson, and Anton Huether; North Dakota State College of Science (NDSCS) represented by Aaron Berg; North Dakota State University (NDSU) represented by Kathy Backen-Anderson, Matt Chaussee, LaDonna DeGeldere, Heather Heger, Kris Michelson, Kay Modin, Vance Olson, Anna Sheppard, Brittnee Steckler, and Janine Trowbridge; University of North Dakota (UND) represented by Janice Hoffarth, Loren Liepold, and Kristi Swartz; Valley City State University (VCSU) represented by Janet Drake and Mary Bostrom; and Williston State College (WSC) represented by Ron Radle.

Schools Absent: Dakota College at Bottineau (DCB)

Human Resource Council representatives: Broc Lietz (HR) is leaving NDSU, effective June 30, so he did not join us. Brittnee Steckler and Collette Erickson attended in his place.

NDUS Staff Senate President Janice Hoffarth called the meeting to order at 8 a.m.

Agenda approval: Drake moved the meeting's agenda be approved, and Liepold seconded the motion. The motion was passed

Approval of minutes—The March 12, 2010 NDUSSS minutes were approved with the name change from Liepold to Hoffarth on “**UND** (Janice)—The Council of College Faculties uses Wimba with one face-to-face meeting.” Anderson provided the initial motion with a second by Chernich to accept the minutes as amended. Motion carried.

Campus updates: The campuses provided updates.

Welcome by NDSU President Dean Bresciani—President Bresciani welcomed NDUSSS to NDSU. He related that Staff Senates existed at three schools where he has been employed, and he witnessed the birth of two of these senates, at Chapel Hill, S.C., and Texas A&M, College Station, Texas.

He advised us to know the complexity of Staff Senate—he reminded us that we have the opportunity to speak for every staff member at our campuses. We must make our senior leaders understand the diversity and richness of whom we are representing. He recommended that we push ourselves to get around and talk to constituents, especially those not in our area, and ask them to let us know about their concerns.

He advised us to move forward even if we are being pushed back, to always push our agenda. Push forward a little, looking for non-threatening ways to inch staff representation forward. Staff are “the core”, they are essential for universities. We must help senior leaders understand that. Staff are necessary for the core

function of an university. Staff are stability, the voice of calm and reason. Ultimately, he feels our goal will be achieved.

Old Business:

Brittnee Steckler, NDSU benefits coordinator, gave an overview of staff retirement plans and supplemental options and terminology.

Sparb Collins, North Dakota Public Employees Retirement System executive director, delivered a response to the financial status of the NDPERS retirement plan. There is a shortfall in the fund, and NDPERS will forward three proposals to the next legislature.

NDPERS was started in 1977 and consists of the state of North Dakota and other political entities (45 percent are non-state groups—counties and cities, judges). Membership has grown because more political subdivisions have joined, such as the highway patrol. Last year, \$80 million was paid out. These funds come from investment earnings. Benefits are not excessive. The total retirement contribution level has never gone up from 8.26 percent, which it was in 1977. Last year, a loss of 32.5 percent was experienced (Loss of 24 percent + 8 percent for total loss of 32.5 percent). Collins related that in 218 years of looking at economic data, only four years were worse than last year.

Other issues complicate NDPERS' problems further. By reviewing experience study (tests underlying economic and demographic assumptions, most significant are mortality and salary), the conclusions are we are living longer, and have salaries which are more than expected. This is good for us but not good for NDPERS (paying out more than expected).

Options reviewed: benefit reductions for new members, benefit reductions for everyone (no one retires until 65 and multiplier changes).

NDPERS has three proposals: All employer contribution, all employee contribution, or 50/50 contribution. The considerations are legal concerns and policy decisions. NDPERS' three proposals will go to interim committee this summer and to the North Dakota Legislature this winter. Every 1 percent change affects all of state; it will be a big issue.

NDPERS submitted the three bills (proposals) to the Employee Committee last March (had to be submitted by March), and they will be reviewed. Hearings will be held in September and October; the proposals will then go before the Legislature in its next legislative session.

NDPEA is submitting a pre-Medicare Plan also (now, individuals pay a large sum now if they retire before age 62).

With the new health care changes, gradually everyone will be enrolled; dependents can stay under parents' plan until 26.

After Collins' presentation, NDUSSS moved on to discuss what its next step should be concerning the NDPERS Retirement Plan shortfall.

Janice said SBHE voted into its budget request to have NDPERS and TIAA-CREF retirement plans increased by a 1 percent paid by employer and 1 percent paid by employee for three years starting July 1. She, however, will get clarification. The SBHE was scheduled to meet June 17 at NDSU.

NDUSSS voted to form a subcommittee to research the shortfall issue and represent staff's concerns. The Subcommittee's charge is two-fold to gather information to be stewards for staff (research NDPERS and TIAA CREF) and develop a position for the December SBHE meeting. In September, the subcommittee will have the information gathered and be ready to develop a recommendation for the September NDUSSS meeting with the possibility of looking at it again if necessary at the November NDUSSSS meeting. The deadline for the subcommittee to be formed is July 15. This gives NDUSSS time to see if the Council of College Faculties has done anything concerning TIAA-CREFF to piggyback.

As far as a SBHE update, Janice has not heard from the chancellor. As far as she knows, at the SBHE retreat, they did not vote on it on NDUSSS having a seat on the SBHE. At the retreat it was stated that all provosts and presidents were in favor of NDUSSS having a seat on the SBHE. At the June 17 SBHE meeting, Janice is going to proceed with the strategy of taking little steps ("Can we be on the agenda?") while keeping the ultimate goal of representing staff concerns in sight. Janice is going to introduce Janine, and she will say that staff are essential to the NDUS campuses. She will reiterate that as staff from 11 NDUS schools, we have waited, this is our lives, we care, we care about the students, and we care about the buildings, many of us work at these institutions for 30 and 40 years. She will respectfully ask the SBHE to give NDUSSS a line item on its agenda; we are an essential part of our university system. Janice will tell the SBHE that NDUSSS anxiously await the SBHE's response, but NDUSSS is representing staff, and the NDUSSS senators will continue their work. Cindy Rerick moved that Janice ask the SBHE for a line item on its agenda for NDUSSS, second from Katherine Backen-Anderson. Motion approved.

Senator Bob Skarphol invited Janice to a meeting of the Interim Education Committee. It was an all day session in the House chambers. Changes in education are coming. Online high school was discussed (Spanish if not taught traditionally. College students could be online tutors. It will use Wimba). If students have health concerns, online high school would enable them to still feel like a part of the group. It will provide better-prepared students coming into our institutions. The best part for Janice was having staff being invited to be a participant. Senator Skarphol said that not including staff would mean "not including one of our players."

UND is reviewing its current tuition model. Statewide, many schools are looking at how tuition is charged. Some models are charging the same rate up to 12 semester hours, charging the same rate for resident and out-of state students or paying for more than 16SH. The tuition freeze is still in effect, but this would be after the freeze ends. With this, online would be folded in.

New Business:

The NDUS office plans to revamp its Web site soon.

Employee Tuition Waivers—No uniform policy across the state as far as staff exits. Under the Roundtable, this is one issue that is left to individual campuses. Three classes a year is allowed, but only leave time given for one class a semester. UND has plant services or facilities as a "cost center" (the employees are paid out of departments' budgets instead of out of appropriated funds) so this is an example where some staff members cannot take classes. Benefits are not equal for all employees.

NDUSSS senators should go back to their schools to see if employees can take a class from another NDUS school and get a tuition waiver.

As far as Bylaws Provisions:

- Removal of an Officer from Staff Senate on campus—two institutions have added provisions to their bylaws to remove officers or request a “vote of non-confidence.” One institution is UND. They ran into problems though with “open-meeting” laws.
- Volunteers for the Bylaws Committee to draft a recommendation for the NDUSSS September meeting were requested. Loren Liepold, Aaron Berg and Linda Benson volunteered. NDSU and UND will send their policies to the listserv to get input.

As far as a membership update: Janice and Janine plan to meet with DCB Dean Ken Grosz. They want to discuss how NDUSSS can get DCB staff engaged.\

Election of Officers: The new slate of officers are Janine Trowbridge, president; Aaron Berg, vice president/president-elect; Kristi Swartz, secretary; and Cindy Rerick, membership officer.

In a discussion of Wimba versus Pronto, it was found that all campuses have Wimba. Ron will give out directions on getting everyone set up. Wimba doesn't have time restraints.

Concerning NDUSSS' next steps: For representation at future SBHE meetings, someone from the hosting campus can accompany the NDUSSS president and vice president. The Executive Committee will discuss this. Nathan rescinded his motion to amend the bylaws to create a new officer position since it is already in Section 6 Item 7 of the Bylaws. The Bylaws Committee will make a recommendation on a position description.

Each campus should ask if there would be funding to have two face-to-face meetings a year. June 15, 2011 is the next NDUSSS face-to-face meeting. MiSU and DSU offered to host; NDUSSS will look at where the SBHE will meet then to determine where NDUSSS will meet.

Each institution decides who should be on listserv, and a “doodle,” e-mail poll will be conducted to determine the best time for the next NDUSSS meeting.

Katherine Backen-Anderson moved to adjourn the meeting, Nathan Anderson seconded, and the motion passed. The meeting was adjourned at 4:21 p.m.

Next meeting: Scheduled on Sept. via Wimba.