

Remarks for the IBOR April meeting
UNI P&S Council President Matt Gordon

Good morning, my name is Matt Gordon, and I am the P&S Council President at UNI. I work as an IT support specialist in the College of Social and Behavioral Sciences. I appreciate the opportunity to speak to you today on behalf of the University of Northern Iowa Professional and Scientific employees. Thank you for your support for higher education in the state of Iowa. UNI currently has over 600 P&S employees working across all five university divisions. This number represents the fact that the P&S group is the largest employee group on campus.

As we all know, this spring brought some serious legislative changes to the contract negotiation process for the United Faculty, which is the union that represents the faculty at UNI. Obviously, the P&S Council is not a union organization, it is not involved in collective bargaining, and thus was not directly affected by the recent legislation. However, by tradition, many of the wages and benefits that the United Faculty were able to negotiate often served as a model for the wages and benefit packages that staff received. There are concerns among many staff members, that if the future wages and benefits packages for faculty become less competitive, the staff would end up feeling the effects of it. Whether it be in the form of decreasing scope or number of benefits, stagnant or only mildly increasing wages, not replacing employees as they leave, or any combination thereof. In short, if the UNI faculty sneeze, will it be the staff that catches the cold?

In February of 2016, the P&S Council, along with UNI Human Resources sent out a survey that asked staff how they felt about their pay and benefits packages that UNI was offering them. Then, in November of last year, the P&S Council sent out another survey to staff, this time asking the staff to rate and review the Council itself. In both those surveys, one of the largest themes that came up was the need for increased professional development. UNI often has difficulty training and retaining talent. Most staff really want to stay to help UNI grow and prosper, but often leave because other places offer more training, better opportunity, or

wages. It is imperative that going forward, across all staff departments, that a larger emphasis be placed on professional development opportunities.

A topic that has also been mentioned numerous times in the past is the need for a complete compensation and classification study to be done. We have lost many key people due to the fact that the pay matrices are outdated. This is especially true in fast-changing areas, such as IT. While turnover at UNI continues to be moderate, this issue is one that must continue to be addressed in hopes of keeping those moderate turnover trends.

On a more positive note, I am pleased to say that the UNI P&S Council has started to take a more active role in campus life. Taking our cue from the Strategic Plan that was developed last year, the P&S Council has begun a more ambitious programming and event schedule. The first example of this effort is the issue of diversity. On April 6th, about a dozen staff members volunteered at Culturefest, an event in Waterloo that showcases our communities growing diverse population. The P&S Council is also taking the lead in developing more staff oriented activities. Examples of this include organizing staff centric campus events, and exploring ideas for more the aforementioned professional development opportunities. Our sister universities have had similar programs in place for years. The UNI P&S Council is now in a position where it working to catch-up to them. I am confident that with the right resources, funding, and support, the UNI P&S Council will be able to provide a substantial return on investment.

We are encouraged by the continued communication among the P&S Council, President Nook, Vice President Hager, and the rest of the university administration through Cabinet meetings and direct discussions. Thanks again for your time and we look forward to your support in working together to make UNI the Right Fit. Go Panthers!