MINUTES
NIUAA Board of Directors Meeting, Wednesday, April 13, 2016
Human Resources Building, Room 100, 11:00 AM

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order by Pres. Joe Grush at 11:00 A.M.


Approval of the Agenda: The Agenda was approved

Approval of the Minutes: The minutes of the January 20, 2016, Board Meeting were approved with the addition that Lynn Neeley also worked on the ad hoc committee to revise the changes in the Bylaws.

President’s Remarks: Joe Grush indicated that his remarks were based on information that he received as a member of SUAA’s Executive Committee (EC). At the February meeting, for example, Executive Director Linda Brookhart indicated that individuals who suffer “extreme hardships” as a result of the State not paying health care bills should report their situations to her at linda@suaa.org. Extreme hardship is narrowly defined as (a) denial of access to a doctor, (b) denial of other health services, or (c) requirement to start paying a bill of $10,000 or more.

At that same meeting, Director Brookhart also announced that major changes in health care premiums may be coming soon. If the Governor and AFSCME are ruled to be at impasse in their negotiations, for example, the Governor can impose a change in health care premiums for those who are still working or retired but are not eligible for Medicare. These individuals would be forced to choose one of four plans that vary in the amount of up-front premiums and back end-deductibles and co-pays. For each plan, individuals with higher salaries or pensions would pay more than those with lower incomes.

Brookhart also indicated that legislators are discussing whether the state should tax retirement income (e.g., pensions, distributions from IRAs, and social security). SUAA is creating a research team to study the subject. Joe was asked to serve as one of three members on that team. He told them he would serve if SUAA continues to back his earlier proposal: “SUAA supports taxing retirement income but only if (a) $40,000 to $50,000 of retirement income is exempt from the tax and (b) the state makes its full annual payments (normal and catch-up) to retirement systems.” EC confirmed its continuing support for this proposal.

At last Friday’s EC meeting, Brookhart discussed two House bills that would negatively impact current employees. One bill (HB4984) makes employers like NIU pay the accrued pension liability for any salary increases above the rate of inflation. The other bill (HB1334) states that if an annuitant is reemployed in a similar position by the same employer and is eligible to receive service credit, the annuitant’s monthly pension above $2,000 would be reduced by the amount of his/her reemployment compensation. The first bill could limit all raises to the rate of inflation; the second bill could eliminate all reemployment.

Joe ended his remarks on a good note. Specifically, President Baker has agreed to sponsor the dinner that follows immediately after the annual meeting on Wednesday, June 1. In tough budget times, we are especially grateful to the President for finding the resources to continue this member benefit.
**Treasurer’s Report:** Betsy Hull distributed the Schedule of Cash Receipts and Disbursement from June 3, 2015 – April 13, 2016 (unaudited). The balance in checking as of April 13, 2015 is $11,990 and there is a Certificate of Deposit in Fifth Third Bank for $10,000. The current financial report currently corresponds to the NIU fiscal year. Betsy suggested that in the future, the report should change to the calendar year, to correspond with the annual reports due to SUAA. In previous years, NIUAA has made a $500 donation to the SUAA Foundation in memory of deceased members. It was noted that NIU is the only state chapter that has consistently donated to the SUAA Foundation. It was moved, and seconded that NIUAA again send a $500 contribution to the Foundation. The motion passed unanimously.

**STANDING COMMITTEE REPORTS**

**Audit:** Lynn Neeley reported that the Audit Committee (Lynn Neeley, John Engstrom and Clair Williams) reviewed the Financial Reports for the years ending December 31, 2014 and December 31, 2015 and it was the committee’s belief that the reports submitted to SUAA accurately reflected the financial transactions which occurred during those periods and the cash balances at the end of the periods.

**Benefits:** Sherie Spear reported that the University Benefits committee has met twice since her last report. The discussions at these meetings focused on benefits to current employees. In the future, Sherrie will ask the committee if they have questions for the NIUAA. In the fall, someone should meet with the SPS Council, OS Council, and the Faculty Senate to discuss NIUAA and the benefits it offers for membership.

**Communications:** The production of the NIUAA newsletter has transitioned to Bob Self. Bob is currently working on the May issue which will be sent out soon. People should send any reports for the newsletter, to Bob, as soon as possible.

**Legislative:** Jim Lockard filed a written report because he could not attend the meeting. Joe Grush encouraged the Board to read this highly informative report. Joe also elaborated on Jim’s report by noting that “legislative observers” believe that (a) no further state spending will be approved for 2016 and (b) the 2017 budget will not be adopted until after the November elections. If state funding is not approved for MAP grants this year, some of NIU’s 5,700 student recipients might be forced to drop out of school.

**Membership:** Pat Vary reported that NIUAA had a table at the NIU Wellness Fair. In December, there were 18 new members and four were dropped. In January there were 6 new members and 6 dropped. NIUAA has finally hit the 1900 members mark.

**Nominations:** Lynn Neeley distributed the slate of proposed nominees for the NIUAA Board. It included: Joseph Grush, President; Lynn Neeley, Vice President; Betsy Hull, Treasurer; Norden Gilbert, Director; Deborah Haliczer, Director; Chuck Miller, Director; and Leroy Mitchell, Director. A motion was made and seconded to approve the presented slate. The slate passed unanimously. A nominee for Secretary had not yet been found, although there were possible candidates that Lynn would be contacting. A motion was made, seconded and approved that allowed Lynn to contact and choose a qualified candidate for the Secretary position.

Joe Grush distributed a paper showing “NIUAA Officers and Directors in Transition from Old to New Bylaws” that delineated their present or past affiliation with NIU and the 2016-17 Term/Year that they would be serving. A motion was made, seconded, and passed that the terms and years-within-terms for all officers and directors as listed would be recommended to the membership at the Annual Meeting.
**Political Involvement:** Alan Voelker filed a written report which was distributed at the meeting. Joe Grush encouraged the Board to read the report for themselves. Joe called particular attention to Alan’s call for donations to SUAAction that will allow it to increase SUAA’s visibility with incumbents and their challengers. Alan also asked Board members to express their opinions as to whether SUAAction should expand its reach beyond elections to the legislature to include elections for judges and other constitutional officers.

**Public Relations/Events:** Steven Johnson distributed the list of upcoming trips. There is a wide variety of events for people to choose from. Steven noted that we no longer have any “give aways” for future events, such as the Wellness Fair.

**SURS Board:** John Engstrom reported that the replacement for Chair of the State Board of Higher Education and Chair of the SURS Board is Tom Cross, attorney and former legislator. His knowledge of the legislative process and access to legislators should benefit SURS members. SURS has received 45% of its funding for FY2016, which ends in June. They have continuing appropriation authority. John noted that many do not know that when a person dies, the proportional amount of the pension already paid, must be paid back. On May 3, SURS and SUAA will be holding a legislative reception at the SUAA office. This is a time when legislators can ask questions. John and Representative Pritchard have consistently attended this event.

**SUAA Foundation:** John Engstrom reported that the SUAA Executive Committee had requested a grant of $20,000 from the SUAA Foundation for materials, postage, etc. to be used in a campaign to promote higher education in Illinois, stressing the importance of colleges and universities to the economy and to the citizens of the State of Illinois. This request was approved by the Foundation.

**OLD BUSINESS**

**Bylaw Revisions:** The ad hoc committee to revise NIUAA’s Bylaws reviewed several changes suggested by Clair Williams, former NIU auditor and NIUAA director. Joe Grush summarized the items upon which the committee agreed to wording changes that make the text more accurate, more precise, and more readable. Joe further indicated that the duties of the Treasurer were re-written and expanded to better reflect what the Treasurer is required to do. Many thanks to Clair for his help in improving the text.

**Dues Collection:** Grush reported that the solution to our “lost dues problem” is almost ready to be implemented. The new form for employees who want to use payroll deduction to pay their dues, for example, is now available on our website. Payroll Office is also in the final stages of re-programming its computer so it can collect full dues from employees who use payroll deduction. Lastly, Joe is preparing a letter that will go to all affected persons explaining why their dues “appear” to be higher and how they can drop their NIUAA membership if they wish to do so.

**Membership Drive:** Our membership drive has stalled. We are not alone in that other chapters are also having a rough go of it. This problem was extensively discussed at SUAA’s EC meeting in February and again last week. Consensus was that non-members (a) are suffering from “pension fatigue,” (b) believe the battles over health care and other benefits have been won, and (c) are more fearful about losing their jobs because the state has not funded higher education. Nevertheless, we will fight on.

**Representative to SUAA Foundation:** John Engstrom has asked to step down for his position as NIUAA’s representative to SUAA, due to his increased responsibilities with SURS. Joe and the Board thanked him for his years of service. It was indicated that someone had expressed interest in taking this position, so Joe will contact him.
Chair of Benefits Committee: Sherrie Spears has also asked for a replacement for her position. She is willing to stay on though if others are not interested. Let Joe know if you or someone you know might be interested and willing to serve in this capacity.

Delegates to SUAA Annual Meeting (June 21-22): Joe asked if there were others that were interested in attending the SUAA Annual meeting, to please contact him as soon as possible. The meeting will focus more on external speakers than business such as revising the SUAA Bylaws. The meeting will be held in Springfield on June 21 and 22. Both Joe Grush and Lynn Neeley will be attending the meeting. Joe said he would be driving to the meeting and is willing to take other folks with him. NIUAA will reimburse for all normal expenses.

Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 12:32 p.m.

[Traditional months for Board Meetings: July, October, January, and April; Human Resources Building, Room 178; meeting times to be determined]