Call to Order and Welcome: President Joe Grush called the meeting to order at 3:05. Joe also welcomed members and guests who were in attendance.

Approval of Agenda: One change was made in the printed agenda. Specifically, Grush noted that President Baker would not speak today because he is at a meeting of university presidents in Cleveland. Members applauded the President for sponsoring tonight’s dinner and for becoming a member of the Association. A motion to accept the revised agenda was made, seconded, and approved.

Introductions: Grush introduced the officers, directors, and committee chairs who were in attendance. The officers included Vice President Lynn Neeley, Secretary Nancy Kasinski, and Treasurer Betsy Hull. The directors included Ferald Bryan, Judy Burgess, Deborah Haliczer, and Dave Mason. The committee chairs were John Engstrom, Lee Ann Henry, Steve Johnson, Margaret Phillips, Bob Self, Pat Vary, and Alan Voelker.

Joe also introduced Jerry Meyers, Linda Schwarz, and Joe Vaughn as past presidents who were also in attendance. Joe then thanked all who are now serving and well as those who previously served.

Approval of Minutes from June 2015 Meeting: A motion was made and seconded to approve the minutes from the annual meeting of June 2015. The motion was passed unanimously.

Treasurer’s Report: Betsy Hull gave NIUAA’s financial report covering the 2015 calendar year. The end-of the-year balance in the checking account was $13,253.12. NIUAA also has a $10,000 certificate of deposit that matures in 2017. If members are interested in a more detailed accounting of financial matters, they can go to NIUAA’s website to find Treasurer and Audit Reports for 2014 and 2015.

Committee Reports

Events/Travel: Steven Johnson thanked everyone who had been on a trip this year. He welcomes ideas for future trips that would be of interest to the members.

Legislation: President Grush is on the Executive Committee of SUAA and learned of proposed legislation that primarily affects current employees. These proposals include such things as eliminating college tuition waivers, effectively limiting annual raises to the rate of inflation, and shifting future pension benefits to a defined contribution plan. While these proposals are still active, none has been passed.

Membership: Pat Vary indicated that membership increased this year—up to 1891. Pat noted, however, that we need more members to have more clout in Springfield. In particular, it is important to have more current employees become members to give us more clout in Springfield and to serve as ambassadors to their colleagues who have not yet joined NIUAA (also see Legislation above).

Political Involvement: Alan Voelker thanked all who have contributed to SUAAAction and encouraged others to do so soon because of the upcoming elections. SUAAAction enhances opportunities for our concerns to be heard by members of the Legislature and the Governor. It also provides opportunities for NIUAA members to attend fundraisers for legislators who support causes important to all of us.
SUAA Foundation and SURS: John Engstrom first reported on the SUAA Foundation by describing its major purposes. For example, John indicated that the Foundation helps SUAA members in need. Recently, it also contributed $10,000 to support SUAA’s campaign to promote the benefits of higher education (yard signs that say “Higher Education Creates Jobs”). Again this year, NIUAA donated $500 to support the Foundation.

John also reported on SURS. He noted that while investment returns have not been good for the last year or two, long term returns have been very good, averaging just over 7% for the past 10 years. John also noted that major changes are occurring in SURS leadership. The Executive Director (ED) left after just one year. Tom Cross now serves as acting ED and searches for ED and Chief Financial Officer are underway. Lastly, John noted that SURS is receiving state contributions to the pension fund.

Revised NIUAA Bylaws: Joe Grush indicated that the process for considering the Revision of the Bylaws would occur in the following four steps: (1) motion is made to accept the revised bylaws, (2) summary and discussion of the major changes immediately follow, (3) amendments, if any, can be made from the floor, and (4) the members vote on the motion to adopt the revised (and possibly amended) bylaws.

Motion to Adopt Revised Bylaws: A motion was made and seconded to adopt the Revised Bylaws.

Summary of the Proposed Revisions: Joe gave a PowerPoint Presentation on the major changes and reasons for them. He also encouraged members to ask any questions on make any comments if they wished to do so. Joe then noted that the most substantive change was to combine the Constitution and Bylaws into one document. This was done to avoid duplication and ambiguities. The terms of the President and Vice-President were changed from one to two year terms to ensure continuity of leadership. The composition of the Board of Directors was also changed to ensure that it was more representative of the membership by designating positions to be filled by Faculty, Operating, and Supportive Professional Staff.

Among other changes, the greatest revision was in the article on “Committees.” For example, the number of committees was increased to 10 by adding 2 new committees, some committee titles were changed to more accurately reflect their purpose, and the duties of other committees were reconfigured to make them more coherent. Additionally, the number of Board Meetings required per year was reduced from 4 to 2, but the Board will still meet as often as needed. The number of members needed to call a special meeting, to constitute a quorum at such meetings, and to propose bylaw amendments was changed from 25 to 50. This was done to ensure more membership support for minority initiatives.

Two new bylaws were also proposed. One would allow the Board to use electronic media to vote on urgent matters that arise between meetings. A second new bylaw details the process to be used if NIUAA were to dissolve. Grush quickly noted that there are no plans or even any discussion to dissolve NIUAA, but the new bylaw describes the process to be used if the necessity of dissolution were to occur.

Questions and Comments: Jerry Zar indicated that the references to State Universities Annuitants Association (SUAA) and State Universities Retirement System (SURS) in Article I and II should be checked for accuracy. Grush said that this would be done. Sally Stevens suggested that the dates for all previously approved changes to the Constitution and Bylaws should be included at the end of the Bylaws. Grush indicated that this addition had been planned and would be included in the final version of the revised bylaws. This information was omitted from copies distributed at this meeting to save duplication costs.

Amendments from Floor (if any): None.
Vote on Motion to Adopt: The motion to adopt the Revised Bylaws was unanimously approved. A complete copy of the Approved Bylaws is on NIUAA’s website.

Before moving on to other business, Joe thanked the committee of Ferald Bryan, Jim Lockard, and Lynn Neeley for working tirelessly on the revised document. He also thanked Alan Voelker, Bob Self, and Clair Williams who carefully read, re-read, and provided significant input to the final document.

Election of Officers and Directors: Lynn Neeley, Chair of the Nomination Committee, thanked Judy Burgess and Michael Gonzales for serving on the committee. Lynn also presented the Slate of Officers and Directors. Officers are: President, Joe Grush; Vice President, Lynn Neeley; Secretary, Chris Atherton; and Treasurer, Betsy Hull. Directors are: Norden Gilbert, Deborah Haliczer, Chuck Miller, and Leroy Mitchell.

Vote on Slate of Candidates: A motion was made and seconded to adopt the slate of candidates proposed by the committee and endorsed by the Board. The motion was unanimously approved. [Note. Joe Grush and Lynn Neeley were not involved in the discussion of the President and Vice President positions.]

Vote on Terms of Appointments: Joe Grush presented the Board’s recommended terms for officers and directors. Specifying the terms for Board members is necessary to make the transition from the old to the new bylaws. In making its recommendations, the Board sought to balance the need for some continuity of leadership with the desire for some turnover to bring new people and ideas into the Association. A motion was made, seconded, and approved. For the record, the terms of all elected Board members are as follows:

- Grush, President: 2nd term, 2nd year
- Neeley, Vice President: 1st term, 2nd year
- Atherton, Secretary: 1st term, 1st year
- Hull, Treasurer: 1st term, 2nd year
- Bryan, Director: 1st term, 2nd year
- Clayton, Director: 2nd term, 2nd year
- Norden Gilbert: 1st term, 1st year
- Mike Gonzales: 1st term, 2nd year
- Debbie Haliczer: 2nd term, 2nd year
- Chuck Miller: 1st term, 1st year
- Leroy Mitchell: 1st term, 1st year
- Dan Wunsch: 2nd term, 2nd year

Presentation of Appreciation Award: John Engstrom presented the Appreciation Award to Lee Ann Henry for outstanding service to NIUAA. This Herculean service has included such things as tracking the email and street addresses of all 1,900 members, arranging to have NIUAA Newsletters sent to members, distributing notices of holiday dinners and annual meetings, and posting meeting minutes and financial reports on our website. In short, Lee Ann Henry has been an indispensable member of NIUAA’s administrative team.

Representative Robert Pritchard: Representative Pritchard thanked NIUAA for the strong support and encouragement it gives to current employees, who are under a lot of stress due to the lack of a State budget and concerns over pension plans. Pritchard also noted that President Baker has been in Springfield quite often over the past year to advocate for higher education.

Representative Pritchard then summarized what was going on in Springfield. He noted that while many bills have been proposed, Speaker Madigan cancelled several House sessions that hindered any action on these bills. Pritchard also indicated that some bi-partisan agreement is emerging in talks about the budget that we do not hear about in the media. Members are taking some initiative by not simply following the leadership. A Bridge Funding Plan and Partial Budget for 2017, for example, have been proposed. Other proposals have also been talked about regarding benefits and pensions, but nothing serious has emerged.
Representative Pritchard then fielded comments and questions from the audience. Herb Rubin asked if Pritchard—as a senior ranking Republican—was making any recommendations to the Governor to get him to compromise on his reform agenda. Pritchard noted that the Governor has already indicated that he was willing to temporarily drop all of his “reform demands” in the interest of getting a stop-gap or six month budget approved for fiscal year 2017.

Lou Jean Moyer asked if there was any discussion about eliminating the Windfall Provision that effectively prevents individuals from receiving social security benefits even if they earned them. Lou Jean went on to say that the Windfall Provision is grossly unfair and gave some other arguments as to why it should be repealed. Representative Pritchard said that, to his knowledge, no discussions were taking place on this issue that is ultimately in the hands of the federal government.

Pat Vary asked if there were any legislative discussions of the State’s taxing retirement income. Pat indicated that she personally was willing to pay some taxes on her pension. Representative Pritchard first noted that annuitants have not paid any State taxes on either their contribution to or payments from their pension systems. Nevertheless, he noted that legislative discussions are so focused on budget matters now that they crowded out any real discussion of other important issues.

**Concluding Remarks:** President Grush summarized some of the activities of the Board over the past year. These included a membership drive that netted 80 new members, a concerted effort to correct problems in payroll deduction that was robbing NIUAA of some dues, and sustained work on the bylaw revisions. Grush said that he thought it was a good, productive year and he thanked the Board of Directors and Committee Chairs for their efforts and service. In particular, Joe thanked outgoing members for their contributions. Grush concluded by noting that the focus of the coming year would be on current employees.

**Adjournment:** A motion was made, seconded, and approved to adjourn the meeting at 5:00.