President’s Report

Fellow NIUAA Members:

It’s an uncommonly warm Easter Sunday (in Illinois, at least) as I write this message. I hope you were able to enjoy the day to the fullest with family and friends. I’m not quite ready to declare that spring has arrived, as cooler temperatures are forecast, but at least there is hope.

Please mark June 4, 2014, on your calendar for our NIUAA annual meeting. This gathering will be the first time for President Baker to participate in our annual meeting. He is anxious to share with you his vision for NIU. I urge you to take advantage of this opportunity to meet and hear our President as his first year in office nears its conclusion.

The annual meeting will begin with association business at 3:00 p.m. in Holmes Student Center’s Sandburg Auditorium. Following tradition, President Baker will host a complimentary buffet in the Duke Ellington Ballroom after the business meeting, beginning with a cash bar social period. This is always a pleasant opportunity for conversation and food after the rigors of talking business. Meeting details are repeated below, and the draft minutes of last year’s annual meeting have been included for your review at the end of this newsletter. They will be voted upon at the annual meeting.

Regrettably, public employees and retirees remain a primary target as legislators seek solutions to the state’s financial challenges. In fact, the pension reform law passed last December, though still being challenged in the courts, is causing much uncertainty and concern, especially among current employees. The situation is discussed below in the legislative report.

Last year at this time, a record number of NIU faculty and staff had recently retired or planned to do so by the end of the fiscal year on June 30. This year may well see a new record set due to changes in the pension law. These changes, if upheld in the courts, will affect all SURS members as well as participants in the other state retirement systems except for the Judicial Retirement System. There is much concern on every campus about the impact of a large number of retirements late in the fiscal year, as most will be veteran faculty and staff members who will leave large gaps in each institution’s human resources.

The State Universities Annuitants Association (SUAA), of which we are one chapter, is a large organization working and lobbying on your behalf, and your concerns expressed to our legislative representatives will be taken seriously. The SUAA and SURS websites (listed below) are excellent resources for the latest information on legislation affecting your benefits. NIUAA also strives to keep you informed by email, but we need your email address to do so. If you are among the several hundred members who did not receive this issue of The Annuitant electronically, please send a note to Lee Ann Henry, University Liaison, at lhenry@niu.edu to be added to our email lists, with a copy to me at jalockard@gmail.com. I will also provide political and legislative information of interest to NIUAA members via email. No spam, just the information you need in the timeliest way possible.

Be sure to read this issue of The Annuitant completely, as each report provides important information for you, our members. If you are reading the electronic version of this document, each web address contained in the articles is active to make it easier for you to find the resources referenced. Please visit our recently updated website (www.niu.edu/annuitants) and help us grow by referring non-members to the site. Finally, don’t forget to mark Wednesday, June 4, on your calendar for our annual meeting. I look forward to seeing you all there.

Jim Lockard
NIUAA President
Legislative Report

by Jim Lockard
Legislative Chair

No new legislation that would affect NIUAA members has been passed in Springfield since the last legislative report in February. Indeed, none is expected in the near future. By now you are probably familiar with the basic provisions of the pension “reform” bill that passed last December in the General Assembly and was quickly signed by Gov. Quinn, becoming Public Act (PA) 98-0599. Although this law is the target of five lawsuits challenging its constitutionality, SURS must implement its provisions starting June 1, 2014, unless a court issues a stay. This makes it important to be familiar with the law. Briefly, the provisions that appear to be of greatest significance for most SURS participants change the Automatic Annual Increment or AAI (often mis-termed COLA) and the Effective Rate of Interest or ERI.

The change in the AAI affects all Tier I current retirees as well as future retirees. (Persons hired under Tier II, which became effective Jan 1, 2011, already participate in a plan with reduced benefits, and employees in the Self-Managed Plan are unaffected, so far.) Effective January 1, 2015, instead of the current 3% compounded AAI, under the new law the increment will be 3% of the lesser of one’s total annual pension or $1000 times years of service at retirement. Any retiree whose pension is more than $1000 times years of service will receive a reduced AAI. For example, a person who retired with 25 years of service and receives a pension of $30,000 would receive an AAI of $900 currently (3% x $30,000) but under the new law, the increment would be only $750 ($1000 x 25 years x 3%). With the same 25 years of service, a person receiving a pension of $40,000 would also receive $750 rather than $1200. Furthermore, individuals who retire in the future may receive no AAI at all in each of 1 to 5 years of their retirement, depending on their age on July 1, 2014. Obviously, this revised AAI is very detrimental to retirees now and to current employees when they retire.

The change to the ERI is more difficult to understand; it does not affect anyone who is retired by July 1, 2014, and does not affect every future retiree, only those Tier I individuals who may receive a higher pension based on the Money Purchase Formula than on the General Formula. Rather than try to briefly explain this change, suffice it to say that SURS estimates a reduction of 20-30% in one’s pension for those retiring on or after July 1, 2014, under Money Purchase. This is a major factor driving many individuals to retire quickly this year rather than face such a large reduction in their pension.

For more detail on the changes, visit the SURS web site (www.surs.org) and follow the links relevant to pension reform. The most comprehensive set of materials is found at www.surs.org/news-article/040414/learn-facts-about-pension-reform. There are also special issues of The Advocate for Tier I participants (www.surs.org/pdfs/advocate/Tier1AdvocateApril2014.pdf) and Tier II participants (www.surs.org/pdfs/advocate/TierIIAdvocateApril2014.pdf).

As promised (or threatened, depending on your point of view), five different organizations, including SUAA, have filed lawsuits challenging these pension reforms on multiple legal grounds. Unless the courts issue a stay, the new pension provisions will become effective June 1, 2014 or later as specified in the law. The effective dates are summarized in SURS’ Pension Reform FAQs, available at www.surs.org/pdfs/news/PensionReformFAQs.pdf. All five of the lawsuits have been consolidated in Sangamon County. The Attorney General has until May 15 to file the state’s response to the suits, and the first hearing will be held on May 22, at which plaintiffs’ attorneys will begin to present their case.

Although the pension changes are the topic of greatest interest at this time, don’t forget that healthcare premiums for state-sponsored coverage for retirees will double on July 1, 2014. Please note also that there are now two different Benefits Choice (BC) periods for retirees. Retirees who are not yet, or may never be, Medicare participants continue to have the same May BC period as those currently working (May 1-June 2 this year), while retirees who are receiving Medicare benefits (and whose dependents, if any, are also Medicare recipients) have their BC period late in the year. At that time, those who chose one of the state-sponsored plans, such as United Healthcare, will be able to select a different plan or opt out and return to traditional Medicare. Those who opted out for this year will be able to choose one of the state-sponsored plans, if desired. FY 2015 Benefits Choice booklets should be available by the time you read this at www2.illinois.gov/cms/Employees/benefits/Pages/Default.aspx.

As always, if you as an NIUAA member are not already receiving periodic updates on the latest developments regarding pensions and benefits, please contact Jim Lockard at jalockard@gmail.com. I will be glad to add you to the NIUAA distribution list that I use to get the latest information to our members in a timely manner. A non-NIU email address is preferable, but not required. If you do not use email, please try to identify a friend, neighbor, or co-worker who does receive these updates and ask that person to share them with you. NIUAA recognizes that many members simply do not have access to email, but neither NIUAA nor SUAA can afford to mail more than a few printed materials to the membership each year and they will never be as timely as our email communications.
Report from State Universities Retirement System (SURS)

by John Engstrom
SURS Representative

This report will cover three areas: (1) current financial status of SURS, (2) recent activities by SURS and its Board, and (3) the pension reform act from SURS’ point of view. Any opinions expressed in this article are mine and do not represent official positions of SURS.

Current Financial Status of SURS

As of the end of February, 2014, SURS had $16.5 billion available for its defined benefit plan. The investment return for the fiscal year as of February 28, 2014 was 12.9%. That amount increased during March but has decreased so far in April. Also, as of the end of February, 2014, the defined benefit plan was 46.7% funded, based on market values. That was up from the 43.7% that existed on July 1, 2013, the beginning of the fiscal year.

The state is putting pressure on SURS and other state plans to lower the discount rate (in our case, below the current 7.75%). As a matter of reference, our return on investment as of December 31, 2013 has been as follows: (1) 1 year = 17.3%; (2) 3 years = 10.34%; (3) 5 years = 13.58%; (4) 10 years = 7.76%; and (5) 20 years = 8.52%.

Recent Activities

We are currently engaged in an asset-liability study, assisted by our investment advisor, NEPC. This study will likely result in some changes in asset allocation and a reconsideration of the discount rate.

On April 1, 2014, SURS and SUAA held a joint legislative reception in Springfield, which I attended. SURS’ perspective on legislative activities is encouraging full funding of the required statutory contribution, which has been happening during the past three years. State Rep. Bob Pritchard attended this reception as he has for the past several years.

SURS will hold an investment committee meeting on April 24, 2014 and will hold a full meeting on June 12-13, 2014. While we meet as a full board at least quarterly, the June meeting is considered our annual meeting.

Pension Reform (Public Act 98-0599)

More extensive coverage of Public Act 98-0599 is contained in the report by Jim Lockard. Several lawsuits have been filed regarding this legislation. As of this writing, all but the SUAA lawsuit have been consolidated to be heard in Sangamon County. By the time this article is published in the newsletter, it is possible that the SUAA lawsuit will also be consolidated, although all of the plaintiffs live in Champaign County. At least one of the lawsuits lists as defendants the pension board members, including me. The defense of the public act has been taken over by the State Attorney General’s Office.

SURS and the other pension systems are required to implement this act unless it is overturned by the courts or a “stay” has been granted. Unless either happens, the new Automatic Annual Increment (AAI) will be applied beginning with the January 1, 2015 retiree checks.* The act will have an effective date of June 1, 2014, although most provisions have later dates. Please read Jim Lockard’s article in this newsletter. Details of the legislation are covered extensively in the websites of SURS (www.surs.org), SUAA (www.suaa.org), and NIU (www.niu.edu).

SURS staff are extremely busy, programming changes to our systems, counseling members, presenting seminars, and preparing for new accounting and reporting standards required by the Governmental Accounting Standards Board.

*On January 1, 2015, the AAI will be 3% of the lower of the (1) total annual annuity or (2) the total years of creditable service multiplied by $1,000. At a recent NIU Annuitants coffee hour, I estimated that my annual AAI applied to my January 1, 2015 paycheck would be ($1,000 x 23 x .03) = $690.
Report on Fun and Fantastic Social Events for NIU Annuitants
by Steven Johnson
Events Chair

One of the benefits of belonging to the NIU Annuitants Association is the opportunity to participate in a number of fun special events, planned specifically for NIUAA members and their guests. Check your e-mail or the NIUAA website (under “annuitants association” in the university’s drop-down alpha listing) for times and places. Specific details and costs of events will be forthcoming when available.

It is the belief of the NIUAA Board that the organization of special events helps increase ‘camaraderie’ among members of the association.

Several complimentary coffee klatches and wine and cheese tastings are held throughout the year. Check the Annuitants page often for upcoming events.

Some Upcoming Events:
May 24: Chicago Botanic Garden
June 1: CUBS at Miller Field
June 4: NIUAA Annual Meeting
June 7-21: Alaska, triple Denali and the Yukon (Land+Sea)
June 24: Museum of Science + Industry (70th anniversary of D-Day exhibit)
July 21-25: Stratford Festival of Canada
August 24-30: National Parks trip: Mount Rushmore
October 24: Milwaukee Museum of Art
December 3: Holiday Luncheon
December 6: Chicago Shopping trip
December 17-January 4: Holiday Caribbean Cruise

If you have additional ideas for special events/trips that might interest members of the NIU Annuitants Association, please contact Steven at sjohnso11@niu.edu. NIUAA events are also posted on the NIUAA website: www.niu.edu/annuitants/events/index.shtml.

Membership in NIUAA
by Pat Vary and Cathy Cradduck
Membership Co-Chairs

The NIU chapter of the State Universities Annuitants Association is the second largest in Illinois with nearly 1900 members, second only to the Urbana-Champaign campus of the U of I. In addition, our chapter also has the largest number of current employee members (about 400) among all the chapters, making us unique in our advocacy for your benefits.

As a member of NIUAA you are also a member of the state association and privy to the briefings on benefits, legislation, and policy available with membership. These are primarily available through e-mail postings, so please make sure that Lee Ann Henry at University Advancement has your current e-mail address. She can be reached at lhenry@niu.edu.

All associations are only as strong as their membership. If you have a colleague, friend or family member who is eligible to join NIUAA but has not, please urge them to contact the association, an officer or director, or Lee Ann Henry at University Advancement. Information about the association is available online at www.niu.edu/annuitants, and an application form for membership can be downloaded from the membership page.

Association dues are minimal (currently $34 per year) and can be paid through payroll deduction, direct deposit from pension payments, or annually by check. Dues cover membership in both the state and local organizations. If you have any questions pertaining to your membership in NIUAA/SUAA, please contact Pat Vary at pvary@gmail.com, Cathy Cradduck at ccradduc@niu.edu, or Lee Ann Henry at lhenry@niu.edu or (815) 753-7406. Current employee members should note that if you now use payroll deduction for your membership, when you retire you will need to fill out a new membership form in order to have your dues paid by deduction from your SURS account.
Renewing NIU Parking Stickers
NIU parking stickers expire June 30. For NIU Retirees, parking stickers are complimentary. Those who wish to renew or initiate a retiree (white) campus parking sticker for the 2014-2015 NIU fiscal year, may do so via one of the three options, below:

1. If you have access to the Internet, go to www.niu.edu and then to the Campus Parking Services via the A-Z drop-down index. Click on the “Forms” line on the left hand side and then click on the “Faculty/Staff Vehicle Registration” line. Print, complete, and sign this form. Please be sure to check the “Retiree” box under “Permit Type” on the form. There is no charge to retirees for a parking sticker. Mail it to Northern Illinois University, Campus Parking Services, DeKalb, Illinois 60115.

2. If you do not have access to the Internet, call Campus Parking Services at 815-753-1045, and ask them to mail a copy of the form to you. Then follow the instructions above to complete the form and mail it back to the Campus Parking Office.

3. Finally, visit the Campus Parking Office (they’re lovely people) and fill out the form on the spot. Please note, however, that new stickers will not be available for pickup until June 1.

Lifelong Learning Opportunities at NIU for Retirees
“Just when I thought I was out, they pull me back in…” So says Michael Corleone in the classic movie, The Godfather, a statement uttered by countless retirees. For many entering this new phase of life, while examining and exploring options, the choice is to willfully retain some connection to our previous environment. Others seek new venues in which to participate, whether it’s pursuing new and old hobbies or avocations, travel plans, or other long put-off interests, balancing the comfort and security of our family and friends while seeking out answers and adventures.

The Lifelong Learning Institute (LLI), offered through External Programming in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, allows those persons age 50 or older from any walk of life to choose either course. LLI serves as a venue for sharing ideas, opinions, and experiences, answers many of the questions we face at this stage of our lives, and offers us the opportunity to pursue new areas of interest.

It offers weekly sessions throughout the year in which a wide array of topics are examined and explored, ranging from archeology to science, philosophy to travel, local history to classical music, current events to great movies. LLI’s offerings are organized into four annual sessions. Fall and spring terms are eight weeks while winter and summer offer four-week classes. It is a volunteer-led program; all course conveners are volunteers who may be sharing professional expertise or love for a hobby or an interest in learning something new.

Life is a highway for learning on which the journey, not the destination, is the real reward. Take this opportunity to make or renew friendships, exchange ideas, explore the possibilities, and enjoy new experiences. Come join us. It’s an offer you shouldn’t refuse.

For more information including upcoming specific opportunities visit our website at www.lli.niu.edu or email niulli@niu.edu or call 815-753-5200.

REMINDER
The NIU Annuitants Association annual meeting will be held Wednesday, June 4, beginning at 3:00 p.m. in Sandburg Auditorium of the Holmes Student Center. A complimentary buffet hosted by President Baker in the Duke Ellington Ballroom will begin with a social time (cash bar) following the business meeting (approximately 5:00 p.m.). The unapproved minutes of the June 2013 minutes are printed below for your convenience. Please bring them to the meeting. Some additional copies of the minutes and the agenda of the business meeting will also be available at the auditorium entrance.
Some Websites and E-Mail Addresses of Interest to NIU Annuitants

NIU Annuitants Association Website: www.niu.edu/annuitants/

State Universities Annuitants Association Website: www.suaa.org

Representative Bob Pritchard: 70th District Office
2600 DeKalb Ave., Sycamore, IL 60178
Phone: (815) 748-3494, Fax: (815) 748-4630
Springfield Office: 200-3N Stratton Office Building, Springfield, IL 62706
Phone: (217) 782-0425, Fax: (217) 782-1275
e-mail: bob@pritchardstaterep.com

Representative Tom Demmer: 90th District Office:
1221 Currency Court, Suite B, Rochelle, IL 61068;
Phone: (815) 561-3690, Fax (815) 561-3691;
Springfield Office: 222-N Stratton Office Building, Springfield, IL 62706,
Phone: (217) 782-0535
email: rep@tomdemmer.com.

Senator Dave Syverson: 35th District Office:
200 S. Wyman St., Suite 302, Rockford, IL 61101,
Phone: (815) 987-7555, Fax (815) 987-7563
Springfield Office: 108A Capitol Building, Springfield, IL 62706
Phone (217) 782-5413, Fax (217) 782-4243
e-mail: info@senatordavesyverson.com

Governor Patrick Quinn. (e-mail through his website):
www.illinois.gov/gov/contactthegovernor.cfm

Attorney General Lisa Madigan. (e-mail through her website):
www.illinoisattorneygeneral.gov/about/email_ag.jsp

John Cullerton, President of the Senate: John@senatorcullerton.com
Phone: ; (217) 782-2728

Michael J. Madigan, Speaker of the House: mmadigan@hds.ilga.gov
Phone: (217) 782-5350

For those members who are not represented by one of the above named legislators, you can look up your own legislators and their contact information at www.ieanea.org/legislative/find-your-legislators/ or at www.ieanea.org/legislative/contact-your-legislators/, where you can compose an email message on the spot.

You can also easily reach your legislators courtesy of the We Are One Illinois coalition. Both telephone and email contacts are possible at www.weareoneillinois.org/

In Memoriam

Since the February Newsletter, the university has received news of the deaths of the following Association members:

Bly Allen
Les Barnes
Thomas Dick
A. Oscar Haugland
Violet Hocker
Bonnie Kittle
Robert Nejedlo
William W. Parker
Janice Patterson
Eleanor Price
Joyce M. Steward
Henry J. Twombly
Nancy K. Wirsing
Welcome and General Remarks: NIUAA Outgoing President Jerry Meyer opened with an introduction and welcome. He emphasized that we all need to work to preserve our benefits, and to stay informed as there continue to be on-going problems and difficulties for retirees that need to be solved fairly. NIUAA and others, especially President Peters and Steve Cunningham, have worked diligently on pension reform.

Approval of the Agenda: One change included the addition of Guest Speaker Representative Robert Pritchard and Guest Speaker SPS Council Representative Todd Latham. Accepted and approved with change.

Approval of Minutes: (June 6, 2012). Motion to accept, seconded, and minutes approved.

Recognition of Officers, Directors, and Members of Board of NIU Annuitants Association: Outgoing President Jerry Meyer recognized Vice President and Legislative Chair Jim Lockard, Treasurer Doug Moore, Secretary Sandy Jonker, Past President Linda Schwarz, Committee Chair for SUAAction Alan Voelker, SUAA Foundation and SIRS Representative John Engstrom, Membership Chair Joe Koch, Benefits Chair Sherilyn Spear, University Advancement Liaison Lee Ann Henry, Public Relations/Events Chair Steven Johnson, Communications Chair Gary Gresholdt, Newsletter Editor Jerry Meyer, Directors Bill Blair, Joe Grush, Bill Lundberg, Margaret Phillips, Elaine Spencer, Ralph Wallis (outgoing), Clair Williams, and Holiday Party Co-Chairs Bennetta Stearns and Marge Rey. Bennetta is also the Liaison with School District 428 V.O.I.C.E.S: Volunteers Offering Intergenerational Collaborative Experience with Students.

Treasurer’s Report: Treasurer Doug Moore reviewed the Schedule of Cash Receipts and Disbursements (listed in detail on the back of the Agenda). The information covered the time period of May 27, 2012-May 26, 2013. Receipts included SUAA dues, interest income, the holiday party, and travel trips (less payments) for bus rental. Disbursements included expenses for the holiday party, meeting travel, newsletters, NIUAA coffee hours, outside speaker, contribution to SUAA Foundation and SUAA Constitutional Amendment Initiative. The total resources as of May 26, 2013 were $28,209.57, which will be carried over to the next year. Since there were no questions or comments, a motion to accept was seconded and approved.

Membership Report: Committee Chair Joe Koch reported that the NIU Annuitants Association had a current membership of 1895; currently working members total 408, surviving spouses 103, and 37 members had passed during the year.

Public Relations/Events Report: Events Chair Steven Johnson reported that regular coffee get-togethers are very popular and well-attended. Coffee hours are held at Barnes and Nobles throughout the year and advertised in e-mails, the newsletter, and the Annuitants website. He described the various field trips and encouraged attendance and welcomed recommendations or requests.

Legislative Report: Legislative Chair Jim Lockard reported that nothing much had happened. Emails are sent out on a regular basis informing everyone regarding bills, etc. There are a couple more speakers on the agenda who can add any relevant information or insights.

SIRS Report: John Engstrom will send information via the newsletter regarding the Foundation at a later date. There is a new Chair on the SIRS Board, Lindsey Anderson (who has been a part of the Governor’s staff). John briefly reported on the April numbers: Asset valuation is $15.1 billion, funding ratio was at 44.1%, in comparison to 41.3% at the beginning of the fiscal year. This fiscal year so far has earned 14.9% on investments. Appropriation request for FY14 is funded in the amount of $1,509,766,000. SIRS is geared up to deduct 1% and 2% for health insurance for annuitants, and is developing a new benefit estimator.

Presentation of Candidates for Officers and Board of Directors: Three positions on the NIUAA Board are open – the Vice President and two Director positions. Clair Williams presented names and background information of
candidates: President Jim Lockard (as outgoing Vice President, Jim Lockard moves to President). Vice President candidate Joe Grush began his long NIU career in 1974, and has served as the Chair of the Department of Psychology, Associate Dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, Acting Dean of LA&S, and retired in May 2010 as Vice Provost for Personnel and Budgets. Two-year term Director position: Dan Wunsch began his employment at NIU in 1980, and served as chair of three different departments within the College of Business, and is currently the College’s Associate Dean for Administration. Two-year term Director position: Sara Clayton served the University for a total of thirty-nine years in a variety of civil service positions and has served on many different committees. She retired in 2011 as the Administrative Assistant to the Associate Provost for International Programs. Motion to accept nominations, seconded, and passed.

**Presentation of Appreciation Award:** a Certificate of Appreciation was presented to President Peters from the NIU Annuitants Association with sincere thanks and appreciation for his many years of service and dedication to NIU. A touching DVD presentation (put together by NIU students) was shown thanking President Peters for his efforts in helping to provide NIU students with the best educational experience possible.

**Introduction of Guests:**

President Peters greeted the audience and expressed appreciation for the talented presentation and recognition. He gave a short overview of what has been happening in the State and at NIU. The state funding and the status of public pensions and the general economic climate are still not good. The General Assembly had been meeting but adjourned without any action. The State’s bond rating was downgraded again. The challenges and responsibilities facing the state are enormous. Cuts continue regarding programs and services along with the revisions to healthcare plans. Sensible changes need to be made as it will be hard to attract employees to work for the State of Illinois. Concerned parties continue to work together to promote the IGPA (six-step) pension reform plan. President Peters reiterated that it’s hard to be optimistic, but stay active and involved.

President Peters expressed thanks to the Annuitants Association, and especially Legislative Chair Jim Lockard, for the excellent involvement and communication for Annuitants. He provided an update regarding NIU and was glad to report that the fiscal year budget was basically okay, considering the cuts. Although the concealed carry law was passed (allowing certain individuals to carry firearms), schools and colleges are exempt, and guns are prohibited on campuses. Even with all of the difficulties and restrictions, there are many things to be optimistic about due to the hard work of the faculty, staff, administrators, annuitants, and donors, and we can look forward to a bright future. There is the Vision for Excellence 2020 program, the transformation of the beautiful residence halls, the renovation of the outdoor Recreation Complex (behind the Convocation Center), the Kenneth and Ellen Chessick Practice Center is in the final stages, with other needed projects to be completed this summer. There has been record growth in the University Honors program, and increased accomplishments and resources regarding academics, research, and outreach. NIU and the community were excited to see the football team play in the Orange Bowl. NIU is fortunate to acquire a wonderful new President, Dr. Douglas Baker, along with his spouse Dana Stover. They will do a great job and get everyone’s support, so NIU will be in good hands. NIU continues to make steady progress toward the University’s vision, and will continue to make great strides in the future, moving Forward Together Forward for a stronger University. “Until we meet again, thank you, and may God Bless you and Northern Illinois University.”

**Vice President of Human Resources and Compliance Steve Cunningham:** Steve summarized information pertaining to the pension crisis. There has been a lot of discussion and work done by many, especially regarding the IGPA six-step proposal. To summarize, the steps involve reducing the Automatic Annual Increment, reducing the Effective Rate of Interest (would lower pensions under the Money Purchase Formula), shifting the annual normal costs to the campuses, increasing contributions of current employees, re-amortizing the unfunded liabilities to make them more affordable, creating a new hybrid pension plan to replace Tier II and the Self-Managed Plan for new employees, with current employees able to opt into the plan. There have been bills with variations of the six steps but nothing has been passed as of this date. There obviously need to be long-term solutions that are realistic and guaranteed, constitutionally sound, financially sustainable, fair, and which will still be able to attract and retain employees. There will continue to be information sharing and workshops regarding pension and health insurance changes. Steve expressed thanks to the Annuitants Association for its work and focus.
State Representative Bob Pritchard: Representative Pritchard expressed his appreciation to President Peters for his many years of service and leadership to NIU and the community. He also conveyed his thanks for the opportunity to represent this area in the state legislature. His goal is to contribute to shaping good public policy, to listen to the needs and advice of constituents, and then to advocate for the best long-term solutions. Every year is different and besides the pressing issues of pension reform, some of the legislative sessions focused on issues such as; the concealed carry law, telecommunication reform, natural gas modernization, fracking, and funding of education. All involved parties need to come together in negotiation to get a fair and workable solution to problems within the State of Illinois, including the health care issues. Voters have to step up in 2014 and be visible, as legislators do listen and good things are happening with some of these challenges. We need to focus on the positive and continue to work together for progress, and to speak up. Representative Pritchard pledged his on-going help.

Manager of Insurance and Employee Benefits Dennis Davito: With all the changes going on, especially CIGNA and Medicare and new health care costs, deductibles, and exclusions, Dennis advised everyone to be alert and active. He highly recommended that interested parties read page 19 of the benefits choice handbook, and also page 16 which listed planned exclusions. He also strongly suggested calling CIGNA for information and approvals, and to keep abreast of changes.

SPS Council President Todd Latham: Todd spoke briefly regarding the SPS Council and its scholarship fund for SPS dependents, starting in the fall semester. SPS Council hopes to raise enough funds for an endowment. More detailed information is listed on the SPS website.

Motion to Adjourn: Moved and seconded to adjourn the meeting. Motion passed by acclamation. Adjournment: 4:50 p.m. Respectfully submitted, Sandy Jonker, Secretary

Update Your Contact Information!

Please notify the NIUAA when your address changes by e-mailing or calling Lee Ann Henry: annuitants@niu.edu, lhenry@niu.edu, or (815) 753-7406. If Lee Ann does not have your current e-mail address, please forward it to her. It will facilitate faster communication on matters of interest to annuitants from our local chapter or from SUAA in Springfield.

We are now emailing our newsletter to NIUAA members for whom we have good addresses and mailing hard copies only to those members without an e-mail address. We can contact you with “non-spam” information in a quick, orderly fashion if we have an e-mail address for you. We do not share our list with outside persons or agencies. If you do not currently have an e-mail address, you can get one free by calling the Helpdesk of NIU’s Information Technology Services at (815) 753-8100. They will set up a free email account for you as long as you identify yourself as an NIU Annuitant.
NIUAA 2013-2014 Board Members and Officers

Officers
President . . . . .Jim Lockard . . . . . .141 Mason Ct., Sycamore, IL 60178 . . . . . . (815) 895-9642 . . . . jalockard@gmail.com
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