Call to Order: The meeting was called to order at 10:30 a.m.


Approval of the Agenda: The revised agenda was approved.

Approval of the Minutes of the October 2015 Board Meeting: The minutes of the last meeting were approved as submitted.

President’s Remarks – Joe Grush reported that we finally have a solution to the longstanding problem of losing some revenue whenever dues are increased. The solution consists of using a new form for payroll deduction that includes an explicit statement that the signer agrees to continue to pay dues even if they are increased. The new form also instructs individuals on how they can cancel their membership if they do not wish to pay the increased dues. Further discussion and action on this matter are reported below under Old Business.

Grush also reported that two strategies have been implemented to increase membership. One strategy involved Joe sending personal appeals to 100 individuals he knows. To date, 10 individuals said they had already joined NIUAA, while 31 other individuals actually joined at Joe’s urging. The second strategy had Sandy Flood, the President of NIU’s Instructor Union, send an appeal letter to her 200 plus members. Because Sandy just recently sent a follow-up reminder to her members, it is too early to report on the effectiveness of her efforts.

Treasurer’s Report – The Treasurer’s Report from Betsy Hull was distributed. The checking account shows a balance of $11,891. As per prior approval of the Board, Betsy also obtained a twenty-eight month certificate of deposit (CD) for $10,000 from Fifth Third Bank which had the best rate. The CD pays 1.0% interest and matures on March 3, 2018. An explanation was also given on why receipts from Carder Travel and disbursements to NIU (transportation) do not match in any given month but do match one another by the end of the fiscal year.

STANDING COMMITTEE REPORTS:

SURS Board Report: John Engstrom’s report indicated that SURS’ investments have returned 2.9%, 11.0%, 11.2%, and 7.1% for the past 1, 3, 5, and 10 year periods, respectively. John’s report also indicated that SURS has recently allocated a small amount of funds to commodities, hedge funds, and emerging market debt. Even though Illinois does not have a FY16 budget, SURS has received some state funding. SURS is also waiting for an IRS ruling on whether Tier II benefits meet legal requirements to be exempt from social security taxes.

SUAA Foundation: John Engstrom did not provide a report.
Benefits: Sherie Spear reported that the Provost Office was in the process of developing a hiring policy that would address the problem of dual careers. Sherie also indicated that workers and retirees should be sure to update their beneficiary designations to ensure that their current designations match their current circumstances. Lastly, Spear recommended that NIUAA include contact information for CMS and SURS in The NIU Annuitant so that members can get definitive answers to their benefit questions.

Legislative: Jim Lockard indicated that there was nothing to report on legislation because the Governor and General Assembly are still fighting over this year’s budget. Nevertheless, Jim reported that over 1,000 students have dropped out of Illinois universities because the state has yet to fund the MAP grants. The lack of state funding has also placed universities such as Chicago State in a precarious position which could force it to “close” because it will be unable to meet March payroll without state funding.

Political Involvement: Alan Voelker reported that SUAAction has collected over $200,000 dollars to support political candidates who are sympathetic to and supportive of higher education. SUAAction is now focusing its efforts on the upcoming March primaries, which due to gerrymandering, frequently determine who is ultimately elected to state office. SUAAction also encourages chapter officers and board members to have more direct contacts with their legislators by attending fund raisers or meeting them in person.

Membership: Pat Vary and Cathy Cradduck communicated to Joe Grush that NIUAA is losing a fair number of members. This is a state-wide problem that is not peculiar to NIUAA. In part, the “problem” occurs in organizations such as NIUAA because retirees are more likely to die than younger segments of the population. It also appears that we may lose some members because they think recent legal victories on health care and pension reform eliminate the need for them to stay in NIUAA.

Public Relations/Events: No report was given because Steven Johnson was unable to attend the meeting. At the same time, Joe Grush indicated that all of Steve’s forthcoming trips are listed in the November newsletter.

Holiday Party: Margaret Phillips reported that folks who attended the December holiday luncheon were happy with the Faranda location, the dining room, and serving tables for the buffet and desserts. Phillips also reported that this year’s attendance (79) was down compared to last year (110) because several past attenders were on travel, some spouses were unable to attend this year, and some past attenders unfortunately died. Joe Grush complimented Margaret for saving hundreds of dollars by re-negotiating the number of guaranteed participants.

OLD BUSINESS:

Solution to the Loss of Dues: As indicated in the President’s Remarks, we now have a solution to the problem that increases in SUAA dues are not automatically passed on to current employees who use payroll deduction. As part of the solution, the Payroll Office will automatically deduct full dues (now $36 annually) for every individual who uses payroll deduction. This action will be taken around March 1, 2016, after Payroll has sufficient time to re-program its computer to collect the full dues amount. At that same time, President Grush will send a letter instructing those individuals whose dues were increased how to cancel their membership if they wish to do so but will encourage them to remain a member.

The policy question here is whether the Board should proceed with the “lost dues solution” knowing that we might lose some members as a result of the “increase” in their dues. To help answer this question, Grush distributed a table that showed how many members were paying how much less than the full dues amount. Collectively, the table showed that NIUAA is now losing about $400 a year in dues. If SUAA were to increase its dues by just $2 or $3 annually, however, NIUAA could easily lose an additional $500 to $750 each year.
Given the above information, Grush asked the Board whether it supported the principle of charging all NIUAA members the same amount of dues even if some members might drop their membership as a result. A motion to that effect was made and seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

**Proposed Changes in Bylaws:** A draft of proposed changes to NIUAA’s Constitution and Bylaws was circulated to Board Members before the Board Meeting. Joe Grush suggested that the Board’s discussion of the proposed changes proceed in two stages: (1) discuss all articles except the one on committees and (2) discuss Article VI on Committees. Grush proposed the two stage process because the ad hoc committee to revise the bylaws (Bryan, Grush, and Lockard) finished its work on all of the articles but the one on committees.

Grush further suggested that he first walk the Board through each article, identifying specific changes and the reasons for them. Board members could then raise questions or offer suggestions for change. As the first stage of the process unfolded, board members raised a variety of questions and made several suggestions for wording changes. Suggested wording changes were quite helpful because they add clarity, accuracy, and precision to the bylaw document. The substantive changes proposed by the ad hoc committee include the following:

(a) Combine separate sections on Constitution and Bylaws into one document;
(b) Change one year terms for President and Vice President to two year terms;
(c) Include temporary instructors with regular faculty in allocating 4 board positions;
(d) Specify that at least 1 of 4 board positions reserved for staff be assigned to civil service and a second position be assigned to supportive professional staff;
(e) Post draft minutes within 21 days of each meeting, with final minutes approved at the next board meeting and posted within 10 days of that meeting;
(f) Change number of required board meetings from at least 4 to at least 2 per year;
(g) Change the number from 25 to 50 members who (i) can call a special meeting, (ii) constitute a quorum at a special meeting, and (iii) can petition to change the Bylaws;
(h) Allow the Board to use electronic media to send notices and minutes of meetings, to vote on time-urgent matters that arise between meetings, and to transmit other communications to the membership;
(i) Add Vice President as specified member of NIUAA delegation to SUAA meetings;
(j) Add a new article on procedures to be followed if NIUAA has to be dissolved.

Following discussion of all articles but the one on committees, a motion was made and seconded that the Board endorse the substantive changes proposed by the ad hoc committee and the wording changes suggested by other board members. The motion was unanimously approved.

Discussion then turned to proposed changes in Article VI on Committees. Grush noted that this section was very much a work still in progress because the ad hoc committee did not have sufficient time to reach consensus on what it should include. Nevertheless, Joe noted that the current draft attempts to capture the prevailing sentiment of the ad hoc committee that this article be inclusive, that it acknowledge the significant contributions of our committee chairs, and that it clearly define NIUAA as a service intensive organization. The substantive changes proposed by the ad hoc committee include the following:

(a) Add Education Committee to keep members informed on current issues affecting them;
(b) Add Social Committee to provide opportunities for members to socialize with one another;
(c) Treat Awards Committee as an unlisted, ad hoc committee but retain its function;
(d) Change name and duties of Public Relations/Events Committee to Cultural and Travel Committee to reflect what committee actually does;
(e) Refer to all committees as “ongoing” rather than “standing” or “ad hoc” committees.
Discussion indicated that the names of some other committees should be changed to better reflect their functions, the duties of most committees should be described in such a way that the committees can provide their stated service in a variety of ways as opposed to only one fixed action, and make sure that essential duties now performed by committee chairs are included in the descriptions of their committees.

Following discussion, a motion was made and seconded that the Board endorse the general philosophy underlying the article on committees, that it support the specific changes proposed by the ad hoc committee, and that the Board would leave it up to the ad hoc committee to incorporate the changes proposed by various board members. A motion to that affect was made, seconded, and unanimously approved.

NEW BUSINESS:

Committee Vacancies: Grush informed the Board that chairs and members were needed for the following three committees: Awards, Nominating, and SUAA Foundation. Grush encouraged all board members who are willing to chair or be a member on one of the three committees to inform him of their interest as soon as possible but no later than February 29, 2016.

Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 12:07 p.m.

The next board meeting is scheduled for 10:30 a.m. on Wednesday, April 20, at the Human Resource Services Building, Room 178.