NIUAA Board of Directors Meeting
Wednesday, December 14, 2016
Human Resources Building, Room 100, 11:00 AM

Call to Order at 11:01 a.m.


Approval of the Agenda: Motion to accept the agenda was made by Lynn Neeley, seconded by Chuck Miller, and approved.

Approval of the Minutes of the September 7, 2016, Board Meeting: Motion to accept the minutes was made by Pat Vary, seconded by Norden Gilbert, and approved.

President’s Remarks
- Despite some problems with the use of microphones and the orderly handling of audience questions, Joe Grush said NIUAA’s November Town Hall Meeting was relatively successful. Slightly over 200 individuals attended the meeting, with a clear majority being from the targeted audience of current employees. The 15 questions asked by moderators Lynn Neeley and Jim Lockard were comprehensive in covering legal issues affecting employees and retirees. John Carr, lawyer and lobbyist for SUAA, gave clear and reasoned opinions as to whether he thought each questioned item of potential legislation would be enacted by the General Assembly and whether it would be found constitutional if it did pass. John also made a point of encouraging current employees to join SUAA/NIUAA because the State’s search for “budget savings” is focused on reducing their benefits. After the meeting, eight (8) people joined SUAA/NIUAA and an additional 40 individuals asked for forms to take home. Whether these folks decide to join SUAA/NIUAA remains to be seen. Jim Lockard, Lynn Neeley, and Joe Grush are looking into the possibility of posting a summary of the meeting on NIUAA’s webpage. Of course, John Carr would have to agree with the posting.
- Joe indicated that many sponsors of NIUAA have been hit with major budget reductions which are now forcing them to consider reducing their support of NIUAA. Having lost millions of dollars in tuition income and state funding, for example, NIU President Baker reluctantly decided that he can no longer underwrite a sit-down dinner and open bar for those who attend NIUAA’s annual meetings. Dr. Baker, however, will host a social hour with hors d’oeuvres and a cash bar for this year’s meeting. Somewhat similarly, the Holmes Student Center is studying whether it can continue to provide the free use of Sandburg Auditorium and the Duke Ellington Ballroom for NIUAA events. Additionally, the NIU Foundation is looking into whether it can continue to cover the printing and mailing costs for NIUAA’s newsletters and announcements of the holiday luncheon and annual meeting. As discussions of these matters proceed, NIUAA has to be prepared to absorb some of the costs now paid by others or reduce some services we provide to our members.
Pat Vary asked if we could petition SUAA to give NIUAA an “extra dollar” in dues for each of our members. Joe said that would not work at the moment because SUAA’s budget is barely balanced and it would feel compelled to give the same amount to other chapters. Norden Gilbert suggested we could increase our income if we made a more direct pitch to current employees to join NIUAA. Deborah Haliczer said we should continue to meet with the various Councils but also meet with smaller groups of employees.

- Joe indicated that he thought NIUAA should reduce the length of our annual meetings from 2.0 to 1.5 hours. Using last year’s meeting as a benchmark, for example, Joe said that at least a half hour in time would be saved by not having to deal with bylaw revisions or setting the new terms for officers and directors. One downside of a shorter meeting is that time for members to question President Baker or Representative Pritchard might be reduced. Pat Vary suggested that we should make sure to allow enough time for questions because the annual meeting is the only outlet that Faculty and Staff have to ask questions. After further discussion, consensus emerged that we should experiment with a shorter meeting this year, but evaluate the change for future years.

Treasurers Report – Betsy Hull submitted a written report.

- Betsy’s written report covered the period from January 1 through December 13 of 2016. The report showed receipts of $22,374 and disbursements of $22,559, leaving a balance of $13,068 in our checking account. There is also a $10,000, 28 month certificate of deposit that pays 1.0% interest and matures on 3/9/18. Betsy also noted that NIUAA spends $200 for each coffee hours and $130 to design and layout each newsletter.

Committee Reports

- Benefits: Sheri Spear could not attend the meeting but gave a brief report to Joe Grush. Sherie’s report indicated that the NIU Benefits Committee last met on November 3, 2016, and spent most of its time discussing potential layoffs due to the budget crisis. No one, however, knew the details of any specific university plan for layoffs.
- Culture/Travel: Steve Johnson distributed a list of all the trips that are currently planned for the remainder of 2017 as well as for 2018. Steve also noted that the most recent trips to Branson, Missouri, and Chicago for holiday shopping were well attended and successful. Steven encouraged Board members with ideas for other trips to forward them to him.
- Legislation: Joe indicated that Jim Lockard did not file a report because the Legislature has not enacted any laws that affect our membership. Theoretically, the State could pass a budget during the special session on January 9 and 10, but that is doubtful because Rauner, Madigan, and Cullerton do not appear to be talking to one another.
- Membership: Pat Vary could not give an accurate count of our current members because she and co-chair Cathy Cradduck have had difficulty accessing SUAA’s webpage containing this information. Pat also distributed a flier that board members could use in their person-to-person efforts to recruit new members.
- Social: Margaret Phillips indicated that about 35 members attended the fall coffee hour at the Elks Club and she is planning to have a spring coffee hour at Faranda’s. Margaret also
reported that 67 members attended the Holiday Luncheon with music provided by Zachary Harris. Future social events will be scheduled in a way to avoid conflicts with other events.

- **SUAAction:** Joe indicated that everyone could review Alan Voelker’s full report that was sent to them. Joe called attention to SUAAction’s spending $270,000 in 2016 to promote candidates who are sympathetic to higher education as well as its employees and retirees. Alan’s report also noted 396 NIUAA members contributed an average of $52 to SUAAction.

- **SURS:** John Engstrom submitted a written report that noted SURS has made an offer to an outstanding candidate for its Chief Investment Officer. John also reported on figures which show that investment returns and funding levels for SURS are better than for other pension systems. Lastly, the State has made its full pension payments for the last four years.

- **SUAA Foundation:** John Engstrom submitted a written report and highlighted the four major goals of the Foundation which are to support higher education, disseminate information on member benefits, provide emergency assistance, and support SUAA’s central office. John further elaborated on how the emergency assistance program works.

**Old Business**

- Joe reminded board members that NIUAA has a long-standing custom of donating $500 to the SUAA Foundation to recognize members who have died during the past year. A motion to make a $500 donation to the SUAA Foundation for 2017 was made by Lynn Neeley, seconded by Deborah Haliczer, and approved.

- Joe then turned the meeting over to Norden Gilbert and Steve Johnson to report on what they found and what they recommend with respect to obtaining liability insurance for Board members. Norden reported that Steve’s trips, an area of potential risk, include a clear disclaimer for liability. Steve also noted that travelers are always encouraged to buy trip insurance to protect themselves against unfortunate events. Norden concluded by saying while the Board’s risks from travel and other NIUAA sponsored events are not zero, they are so small as not to warrant buying expensive insurance.

- Despite repeated requests, Joe said he has yet to receive the name of a single person to fill “openings” for 2 committee chairs. Given their long years of service, Joe said it would not be fair to ask Sherie Spear and John Engstrom to serve any longer as chairs of the NIU Benefits and SUAA Foundation Board, respectively. Please help find replacements for these important committees. Benefits Committee is scheduled monthly during the academic year. SUAA Foundation meets twice a year for an hour before SUAA’s annual and fall meetings and involves travel.

**New Business**

- Joe Grush indicated that the SUAA Fall Meeting went off without a hitch. The 2017 Budget was approved without any changes. Despite a 4.0% loss of members and their dues, next year’s budget is balanced. The 2017 Legislative Platform, which is the same as the 2016 Platform, also passed with minimum discussion. U.S. Representative Rodney Davis spoke at the SUAA meeting and briefed the Directors on his efforts to repeal both the Windfall Elimination Provision and the Government Pension Offset. These federal laws deny social security benefits to individuals who earned them but also receive public pensions.
Joe asked the board if it would concur with his intention to appoint Lynn Neeley as chair of the Nomination Committee. A motion to this effect was made by Deborah Haliczer, seconded by Michael Gonzales, and approved.

Joe then asked the Board if it would concur with his intention to appoint Jim Lockard as the chair of the Awards Committee. Joe elaborated to say that he thought it desirable if the last three award winners would serve as the committee, with the chair being the person who received the award three years ago. A motion to this effect was made by Lynn Neeley, seconded by Michael Gonzales, and approved.

Lastly, Joe asked the Board Members to give serious consideration to developing program ideas for a possible town hall meeting in the spring. All ideas should be forwarded to Deborah Haliczer who is chair of the Education Committee.

**Adjournment:** The meeting was adjourned at 12:30 p.m.