Athletic Board
Wednesday, September 19, 2012
Holmes Student Center Room #406, 1:00pm

Present:  David Changnon (chair for Terry Bishop), TJ Lusher, Todd Latham, Don Tidrick, Matt Streb, Jeff Compher, Joe Bittorf, Gretchen Schlabach, Hamid Bateni, David Taylor, John Moulton, Jerry Blakemore, Peggy Simonds, Bill Cassidy, Shelby Miller

Guests:  Carl Armato, Associate AD/Facilities; Shelley Binegar, Associate AD/External; Debra Boughton, Associate AD/Business Operations; Greg Herring, Assistant AD/Marketing; Kim Kester, Head Women's Golf Coach; Christian Spears, Deputy Director of Athletics; Christina Sutcliffe, Head Softball Coach

I.  Call to Order – D. Changnon (1:00pm)

II.  Approval of June 20, 2012, Meeting Minutes

D. Taylor made a motion to approve the June 20, 2012, meeting minutes as presented. G. Schlabach seconded the motion.

Having no corrections or additions, the motion was carried unanimously.

III.  Introduction of New Athletics Department Staff Members

A.  Christina Sutcliffe, Head Softball Coach

D. Boughton began by explaining that over the summer it was necessary to hire a new head softball coach. Coach Sutcliffe comes to NIU from Miami University and is originally from northwest Indiana. Chicago is very important to the recruiting process. Coach Sutcliffe is very excited about this opportunity. Looking forward to the possibilities with the program.

B.  Kim Kester, Head Women's Golf Coach

S. Binegar stated that it had been a very busy summer. Pam Tyska retired after 26 years as the head coach. She was the longest-tenured head coach at NIU, male or female. The conference was looked at first, as we did with Softball. Coach Kester comes to us from Toledo. She played there and was also an assistant coach there. Have five incoming freshmen this year. The team has had a great transition. Allie Parthie has been named MAC Women’s Golfer of the Week. Athletics will be honoring Coach Tyska at the November 14 football game versus Toledo.

Coach Kester stated that she is happy to be here. She does have a young team and they want to do well. Allie is the only one graduating this year.
C. Greg Herring, Assistant AD/Marketing

S. Binegar stated that Amanda Benzine left NIU Athletics over a year ago and the position has been vacant since then. The focus of this position is to help with attendance and revenue so Athletics needed to identify someone with more experience. Greg is the new president of NACMA (National Association of Collegiate Marketing Administrators) this year. Shelley is very confident that Greg is the right person for the job.

Greg thanked the athletics administration for allowing him to be here and is proud to be back in the Mid-American Conference. He has a lot of friends and family in the area. Greg is looking to increase and enhance the atmosphere at athletics events.

J. Compher added that at Athletics’ first town hall meeting of the year, he introduced over 30 new staff members. Athletics experiences 22% turnover each year so we must keep in mind that every other year, just under half of Athletics’ staff is new. It is important to remind them of the department’s philosophies, values and mission. It is a good reminder that we must continuously look at what we do because there are always so many new people on staff. Many of the staff members have MAC ties, which is important, because it helps with expectations based on that knowledge. There are nine Huskie graduates on staff, as well. We like to grow our own and hire our own. NIU is a good place and we attract good people.

IV. Faculty Athletics Representative – M. Streb

A. You may have seen that Kristin Hoffman, a former student-athlete member of the Athletic Board, won an NCAA post-graduate scholarship but, more recently, was named the Bob James award winner. That recognition is comprised of success in the classroom, in competition, and in life. That is great recognition of her accomplishments. The post-graduate scholarship is very impressive but she has also been named one of the top 30 outstanding women athletes. There will be a ceremony in Indianapolis on October 14. Kristin embodies everything we hold important in college athletics.

B. LEaD Program

When Dr. Streb started as the faculty athletics representative, he stated that he wants to win more than MAC championships; he wants our students to win as many academic awards as possible.

He wants to identify the “cream of the crop” among the student-athletes early in their sophomore year. They would be apprised as to opportunities they have as a student-athlete to help them develop skills to make them competitive for many of the academic awards. We do have many very special athletes but we want to help them develop the skills that would allow them to compete.

The other part of the LEaD program is to develop their leadership skills. Once they are identified, the student-athletes meet with Dr. Streb to create individualized programs for them. He wants to put them in touch with someone who can help them with their goals. We don’t want to give them
more work but, ideally, we want this program to be a service to them to help them develop. The program will begin this spring. Once a student-athlete has become part of the program, they are always part of the program. They will also mentor someone from the next class.

The process of selection will begin with coaches nominating student-athletes who are in their sophomore year. The names will go to Athletics’ executive team for review and J. Compher and Dr. Streb will make the final determination.

J. Compher said the main thing is to prepare our students for the opportunities available to them that they may not be aware of. Athletics wants to submit the best possible applicants for available awards.

The question was asked about how many student-athletes will be selected to participate. Dr. Streb answered that the program will be very competitive, between eight and ten student-athletes will be identified and the number should get to between 30 and 35 student-athletes. The focus will be on those student-athletes who are excelling in the classroom but also in the other two areas. The Athletic Board will be kept aware of the program as it moves forward.

C. Cartwright Awards – the MAC faculty athletics representatives went through voting for the Cartwright award. This is the most prestigious award an athletics program can receive. It is based on three different criteria. As we look at the institutions’ GA, it is difficult to calculate. Some schools count athletes who are no longer on the squad, others do not.

Our coaches are really looking at the students they bring in and are focusing on academics first. There is nothing in the information which is of concern and the coaches are aware of where NIU is in the standings and where we want to be.

J. Compher said summer grades were recently reviewed and the department’s GPA increased and NIU is now more in line with how other MAC institutions determine their GPA.

J. Bittorf asked if faculty are responding to the grade report forms and getting the help for the athletes who need it. Dr. Streb said the information is helpful when it comes back in. S. Binegar also noted that SAASS (Student-Athlete Academic Support Services) staff does monitor class work and tries to catch any issues very early. The athletics administrators get e-mails noting any issues. Dr. Streb added that coaching transitions can also come into play when there are issues. D. Changnon suggested bringing Liz Tovar, director of SAASS, to an upcoming meeting to explain what her office does.

S. Miller, a member of the Softball team, noted that academics are very important to the team but it is definitely the primary focus this year. Mandatory tutoring is required. If a student-athlete has a Math, Economics, or Physics class, it is important to get a tutor. Those sessions are important and she can definitely see the difference. The academic advisor is important in the weekly schedule and really helps. Communication between the coach, the team, and SAASS is very good and the help is very much appreciated. T. Latham asked if there is information available which shows what other MAC schools have in terms of their academic staffs. S. Binegar responded that it seems to be fairly even with staffing but it would be interesting to look at best practices.
M. Streb then stated that there has been a change made to the letter that goes out to the faculty explaining when athletes will be gone and explaining the policy on missed classes. Both Drs. Streb and Tovar sign off on that letter. The professors also sign the letter and the student-athletes must do what they are required to do but if they have done everything they are supposed to and the professor still chooses not to work with them, it is possible that Dr. Streb could get involved.

J. Compher explained that Dr. Tovar reports to the vice provost. G. Schlabach asked if that is the preferred model. J. Compher responded that he has been around both models and it is approximately 50/50 across the country. G. Schlabach went on to ask which model works better. J. Compher said it is healthier to go through the provost’s office.

V. Committees

D. Changnon then stated that the committee sign-up sheet is going around and asked Board members to sign up.

A. Equity/Diversity – D. Tidrick
D. Changnon stated that this subcommittee monitors issues that reflect on the university with regard to commitment to gender and diversity issues, responds to concerns that might cause Athletics to be criticized as it relates to those areas.

B. Budget – P. Bauer
D. Boughton stated that this committee oversees the construction of the Athletic Board budget, quarterly reports, ticket policies, and anything financially based.

C. Student-Athlete Wellbeing – D. Changnon
This subcommittee works with Christian Spears on matters related to student-athlete wellbeing and any concerns they may have. We want to provide them with the services they need to be successful in the classroom.

D. External Relations – T. Latham
S. Binegar and T. Latham work together to look at items which affect the University in an external capacity such as tickets, prices, etc.

Over the summer, a survey was done with the season ticket holders. Feedback comprising 110 pages was received. The focus was to learn about season ticket holders in order to better serve them. The external relations subcommittee will be looking at the survey results and how best to work with our season ticket holders. A survey of the basketball season ticket holders will be coming up.

S. Binegar added that over 30% of the season ticket holders responded. In general, 80% are either ‘satisfied’ or ‘very satisfied’ with what Athletics is doing but she will be reviewing the individual comments to see what people are saying.
VI. New Business

A. FY13 Basketball Comp Ticket Policy – D. Boughton
   D. Boughton pointed out that there is no change from last year.
   
   TJ Lusher made a motion to approve the FY13 Men’s/Women’s Basketball comp ticket policy as presented. T. Latham seconded the motion.
   
   Having no questions or discussion, the motion was carried unanimously.

B. FY13 Men’s/Women’s Basketball Ticket Prices – D. Boughton
   This year is the 10th anniversary of the Convocation Center so we have added the Convocation Center Anniversary pack but it must be purchased before December 31. It is a packet of 10 tickets and they can be used all at once or they can be split out among games. This is the only addition and everything else is the same as last year. Fans also have the option to purchase post-season tickets to be used either at the Convocation Center or in Cleveland if they want to do so. D. Boughton also pointed out that if someone purchases courtside seats for both men’s and women’s basketball, there is a discounted price to purchase both.
   
   TJ Lusher made a motion to approve the FY13 Men’s/Women’s Basketball Ticket Prices as presented. T. Latham seconded the motion.
   
   Having no questions or discussion, the motion was carried unanimously.

C. Facilities Update – C. Armato
   He reported that he has been in discussion with Pat Bell from Finance and Facilities and he has reported that the fencing will be going up around the Chessick Practice Center site. Digging will commence shortly. The project will take approximately 12 months to complete, depending on the weather.
   
   J. Compher said that Athletics is beginning to look at renovation of the women’s lockerroom at the Stadium as it was an area noted during the recent NCAA certification cycle. The Athletics executive team has taken a tour of the area to look at how the situation there can be improved. Currently getting an estimate for renovations to be done over a two or three year period. The women’s coaches are not presently taking recruits to the locker room during their campus visits. The Athletic Board will receive more information as the project moves forward.
   
   J. Bittorf asked if bus transportation would be available for post-season (bowl) games. S. Binegar said pricing quotes coming back were extremely high but Athletics will be offering bus trips to the MAC championship again this year.
   
   J. Compher said this year is the 40th anniversary of Title IX and Athletics will be recognizing a former women’s athlete or coach at each of the home football games. Coach Connie Teaberry was honored at last week’s game. Coach Tyska will be honored at a game in November.
September 29 is Faculty-Staff Appreciation Day so please encourage your colleagues to attend the game. Volleyball is home that evening so faculty and staff are encouraged to attend that game, as well.

VII. Adjournment

T. Latham made a motion to adjourn the meeting. D. Tidrick seconded the motion. Motion was carried unanimously and the meeting was adjourned at 2:16pm.

The next meeting of the Athletic Board is Wednesday, October 17, 2012, at 1pm in Holmes Student Center room #406. The Athletic Board executive committee will meet on Wednesday, October 3, 2012, at 1:30pm in the Athletics Administration Conference Room in Convocation Center #200.