

**NIU Annuitants Association  
2021 Annual Meeting Minutes  
Virtual Zoom Meeting  
June 2, 2021**

**Call to Order and Welcome:** Deborah Haliczzer opened the meeting at 3:02 p.m.

**Approval of Agenda:** Amended to accommodate NIU President Lisa Freeman's schedule change by placing Membership report before her remarks. Motion made to accept the agenda by Michael Fortner, seconded by Holly Nicholson, and carried.

**Approval of Minutes from June 2020 Meeting Minutes:** Motion to accept minutes was made by Clair Williams, seconded by Chris Doe, and carried. Final minutes will be posted on the NIU Annuitants Association website.

**Deborah Haliczzer** commented that the past 12 months have been one of the most difficult years on record and that she appreciated everyone's patience. She thanked her daughter and others who assisted her, including the NIUAA board members and all committee chairs. She mentioned that this year is the state association's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary; however, we need to pay attention amidst worries about the economy and fears that the legislature might strip our pensions. Five NIUAA members are registered to vote at the SUAA annual meeting later this month.

**Treasurer's Report:**

Report made by Al Mueller

Al Mueller presented the Treasurer's report, noting that the balance of the account is in very good shape. He presented an updated report showing \$8164.87 in checking, and a total of \$34,255.54 in all accounts. Motion to accept the report was made by Clair Williams, seconded by Andy Small, and carried.

**Audit and Finance Report:**

Report made by Clair Williams

The Audit and Finance Committee reviewed records maintained by the Association's Treasurer. As stated in the report, they examined and found the financials as of December 31, 2019 and December 31, 2020 accurately reflect the financial activity of the Association. An audit letter was sent on January 19, 2021. The committee also made recommendations for acquisition of CDs. Clair Williams thanked the committee members and noted that one member is leaving.

**Scholarship Committee Report:**

Report made by Clair Williams

Clair Williams reported that the committee increased the number of scholarships, awarding four for the 2020-2021 year. He read excerpts of the thank-you letters received from scholarship recipients.

Since last fall, the committee has been working to increase scholarship funds by \$7500 by September 2021. Committee members will be participating in Huskies United as part of these fundraising efforts. Clair thanked Toni Tollerud, Deborah Haliczzer, Norden Gilbert, and Joe Grush for their assistance.

Deborah Haliczzer observed that other Annuity Association chapters are impressed that NU has its own scholarships alongside SUAA. Toni Tollerud asked for a note of thanks to be entered in the minutes to Clair Williams for his leadership on the Scholarship Committee.

### **Presentation and Election of Officers and Directors:**

Deborah Haliczzer thanked those who have given their service to the board: Lynn Neeley, past president; Al Mueller, treasurer; and board members Sabrina Hammond, John Hulseberg, Carole Minor, Toni Tollerud, and Deborah Haliczzer. She also thanked everyone who had served on committees.

The slate of nominees, to be voted on as a block, was as follows:

#### **Officers:**

Andy Small, President (outgoing Vice President)  
Toni Tollerud, Vice President (outgoing Director)  
Linda Holderman, Treasurer

#### **Directors:**

Terry Borg  
Ferald Bryan  
Cynthia Nelson  
Paul Stoddard

### **Vote on Slate of Nominees:**

Deborah Haliczzer asked if there were any nominations from the floor. There being none, she asked for a motion. Motion made to approve the slate of 2021-2022 nominees by Michael Fortner, seconded by Michael Peddle, and carried.

### **Membership Report:**

Report made by Chris Doe, Andy Small, Deborah Haliczzer  
Chris Doe screen-shared a chart that showed the flow of membership over the past year. In June 2020 there were 1673 members. Numbers dropped from September through December 2020 due to retirements and deaths, then gradually increased. Now numbers are going through another slow decline. There were 1651 members as of May 2021. Chris remarked that the month after a drop in numbers, there's an uptick because after employees retire, they change their payment plan and are reinstated on the membership list.

Deborah asked if the letter mailing in January helped recruit new members; Chris responded that it was possible, because the membership numbers following the mailing went from 1650 to 1665. She added that the SUAA report tells whether a person is a new or a returning member. Also, the last operating staff newsletter listed NIUAA as a link of interest; we got a few new members as a result.

Andy noted that if non-faculty retirees want to keep their NIU email account, they have to go through Chris Doe and must be a member of NIUAA. He asked if that is a recruiting strategy; Chris responded that 20 people were added as a result of this policy. She said that anyone who wants to be on the strategic planning committee should contact Deborah or Andy.

**NIU President Remarks:** Presented by President Lisa Freeman

President Freeman said at the outset that her comments would focus on the positive, noting that despite the pandemic, May 2021 commencement events included outdoor celebrations for some 2020 and 2021 graduates and Convo Center ceremonies for others. The administration is planning to bring students back in person in August for the Fall semester. This fall, 70-80 percent of courses will be face to face, while online classes will also be offered for flexibility.

COVID-19 vaccinations were administered to 1200 employees and 900 students at the Convo Center, with more at other locations. Vaccinations will not be required for students or employees; however, testing will be mandatory in the fall for unvaccinated students and employees on a regular basis. A negative COVID test will be required for dorm residents.

Athletics will follow NCAA protocols. The NIU administration is expecting 100 percent capacity at sports events as long as the state remains open at stage 5; capacity at performing arts events is also expected to increase. With regard to expected enrollment, President Freeman said we need to convince new and returning students that things will be different in the fall. Applications are at an all-time high, and 15,000 students were accepted. Removing standardized test scores more than doubled the number of scholarships awarded to minority students. Also, Rockford Promise (NIU's partnership with that city) resulted in more than a hundred percent increase in new students from Rockford.

President Freeman expressed her pleasure at the hiring of Mayra Lagunas, Associate Vice President of Enrollment Services and Director of Admissions, who was a first-generation college student and is a seasoned enrollment management and admissions professional. NIU has also been highly successful this year in hiring diverse faculty.

**Report on NIU's 125<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Events:** Presented by Matt Streb, NIU Chief of Staff  
Dr. Streb noted that the anniversary celebration got off to a good start, but some changes had to be made due to the coronavirus pandemic. The biggest changes involved the moving events from in-person to virtual. Unfortunately, the week-long celebration of *Women at Northern* had to be cancelled. He is looking forward to welcoming back people this fall to Boutell Hall for a 125 Years Plus concert.

Dr. Streb said that last year, NIU's key moments were posted, and are up on the website for viewing. He is proud of the project's outcome and thanked Melanie Megara for her work. They had to postpone an 1895-1899 exhibit at Ellwood House, but it is now on the website as well. Finally, he commented that the NIU sculpture, which was not tied in to the 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary, became very popular and took hold on campus; students especially enjoy taking selfies with it.

Dr. Streb then conducted a Q&A session, addressing questions about office reopenings and the possibility of extending online hours for student access.

Deborah Haliczzer asked President Freeman how NIUAA could help her. She responded that the NIUAA members are all "terrific ambassadors for the University who make a tremendous contribution to NIU" and to new students. Deborah noted that she herself had come here as a freshman and had been affiliated with NIU for 51 years. She thanked President Freeman and Dr. Streb for speaking with us.

**SUAA Board Report:** Report made by Steven Cunningham

After finishing his first term on the SUAA Board, Steven Cunningham said he hopes to serve for a second term, noting that NIU's percentage of participants is very high, close to that of the

University of Illinois. Steven reported that the upcoming SUAA annual meeting in Springfield would likely be attended in person by most of the board members, with others attending remotely. He said it had been a challenging year due to the pandemic.

Last winter, SUAA sent out a letter to over 37,000 participants which resulted in an increase in membership to about 14,200. However, that number represents only 11% of total potential members. Steven pointed out that SUAA represents *all* annuitants, not just members. He sees improvement coming for municipal and state plans because SUAA addressed challenges.

Steven noted that the membership increase helped stabilize SUAA's finances, but this is an ongoing issue. A lot of the work gets done at the central level in Springfield, but much is also done at the local level. Steven thanked NIUAA participants for supporting the Wild Ideas Initiative, which was started by SUAA executive director Linda Brookhart.

Steven reported that concerns are building about pension system funding as the state budget gets tighter. However, the Illinois general assembly included full funding for pension systems, and he was happy that the state budget was approved. SUAA will continue to work with the governor and other legislators to protect our pensions. Steven stated that the pension protection clause in the Illinois Constitution is strong relative to other states, and an attempt in 2012 to change it wasn't successful. This issue will be coming up in the 2022 election, but he believes our pensions are safe. Deborah Haliczzer pointed out that any time there is a threat to pensions, state and local organizations mobilize and inform the membership.

## **Presentation**

**Appreciation and Recognition Awards:** Last year's recipients of the Appreciation and Recognition Awards, Robert Self and Lynn Neeley, selected the following people for this year's awards; all were approved by the NIUAA board:

Chris Doe, former Secretary and now University Liaison;  
Linda Holderman, volunteer on the Audit & Finance Committee;  
Sara Lamberty;  
Al Mueller, two-term Treasurer,  
Linda Schwarz, President and Past President

Last year, Deborah Haliczzer and Clair Williams personally delivered awards to the recipients; she and Andy Small will deliver them this year.

## **Concluding Remarks and Discussion:**

Andy Small applauded Deborah Haliczzer's patience and leadership during this turbulent time. Deborah Haliczzer expressed her appreciation to all members who attended today's virtual meeting.

**Attendance:** Count was 41 in attendance

**Adjournment:** Motion to adjourn made by Clair Williams, seconded by Carole Minor, carried, and adjourned at 4:30 p.m.

*Respectfully submitted by Diane Johns, Secretary, NIUAA Board*