

Minutes of the
NIU Board of Trustees
**ACADEMIC AFFAIRS, STUDENT AFFAIRS
AND PERSONNEL COMMITTEE**
March 4, 2004

CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

The meeting was called to order by Vice Chair Barbara Giorgi Vella at 9:00 a.m. in the Clara Sperling Sky Room of Holmes Student Center. Recording Secretary Sharon Mimms conducted a roll call of Trustees. Members present were Student Trustee Kevin Miller and Vice Chair Vella. Not present was Chair Robert Boey. Also present were Committee Liaison Ivan Legg, President John Peters and Board Parliamentarian Kenneth Davidson. With a quorum present, the meeting proceeded.

VERIFICATION OF APPROPRIATE NOTICE OF PUBLIC MEETING

Board Parliamentarian Kenneth Davidson stated that since former Trustee Catherine Adduci, who was a member of this committee, is no longer a member of the voting Board of Trustees, the quorum requirement for this committee of three would now be two. He then gave confirmation of Open Meetings Act notification compliance.

MEETING AGENDA APPROVAL

Student Trustee Miller made a motion to approve the agenda. It was seconded by Trustee Vella. The motion was approved.

REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF MINUTES

It was moved by Trustee Miller and seconded by Trustee Vella to approve the minutes of the September 4, 2003 meeting. The motion was approved.

CHAIR'S COMMENTS

Today, Vice Chair Vella said, we have four items that will be presented for action and four for information only. The March meeting of this committee is of particular importance for faculty, because this is the time of the year that the Board acts on recommendations for faculty and supportive professional staff sabbatical leaves. There are three programmatic issues on today's agenda, including a request for off-campus degree authority, a request for new emphases and a request to delete an emphasis. Information items include an update on the status of NIU's reaccreditation by the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association as well as an increment summary report. We will also receive the university's Annual Report on Oral English Proficiency for the 2002-2003 Academic Year, which provides information on NIU's procedures for insuring that those who teach in classrooms are proficient in spoken English. The last information item is the annual IBHE Report on Underrepresented Groups for the 2002-2003 Academic Year.

Vice Chair Vella then recognized the representatives of the University Advisory Committee, Paul Loubere and William Tolhurst.

PUBLIC COMMENT

The Chair asked Board Parliamentarian Kenneth Davidson if any members of the public had registered a written request to address the Board in accordance with state law and the Board of Trustees Bylaws. Mr. Davidson noted that no requests for public comment had been received.

UNIVERSITY REPORT

Agenda Item 7.a. – Recommendations for Faculty and Supportive Professional Staff Sabbatical Leaves for the 2004-2005 Academic Year

As I have noted several times in the last two years, Provost Legg said, sabbatical leaves are an integral part of the academic scholarly mission of the university. It is a pleasure to consider these applications and to process them so that these leaves can be used by the faculty. This year we have a situation which is a little different from what has been experienced in the past. We have only 31 faculty sabbatical leave requests, and none from the supportive professional staff. Normally, we are allotted around 50 of these positions for sabbatical leaves, and we usually have close to 50 applications. I do not know why we are down this year, but I think that, in part, it may reflect the fact that we are so tight on availability of faculty for our teaching instructional mission that taking a sabbatical leave is not as easily facilitated at this time. In any case, he said, we still have 31 applicants which I would like to recommend to the Board for approval. The university request was that the Academic Affairs, Student Affairs and Personnel Committee endorse the university's decisions to grant the recommended sabbatical leaves for 2004-2005 and ask the President to forward them by means of the President's Report to the Board of Trustees for approval at its March 18 meeting.

Before we begin the formal voting process, Vice Chair Vella said, I just want to say that when I was chair of this committee, I was always impressed by the caliber of the way faculty and support staff spent their time on their sabbaticals, all the information and the enrichment they gained, and what they brought back to the university. So, even though it is expensive, it is a wonderful thing that the faculty are encouraged and continue to do so much. As was mentioned earlier, we are short on Trustees today, so I will turn this over to Mr. Davidson for an explanation of how this vote will proceed, given the fact that we have the Student Trustee and one Trustee present today.

This is a unique situation, Mr. Davidson said, which this Board has not experienced previously. I would point out that there is a limitation under the NIU law on the authority of the Student Trustee to vote on certain matters involving the faculty. This would include tenure matters as well as sabbatical matters. As the Provost has indicated, this is an endorsement and not a final action. In order to conduct business on this as an action item to endorse, I would recommend that the Chair entertain a motion on approval of the endorsement request. Should that motion be agreeable with the other voting member present, he would propose the motion, which would be treated as seconded by the Chair. At that point, there should be a temporary change of the role of the Chair to the Student Trustee so that the Chair would temporarily step down so that the Student Trustee could call for a vote. The vote then could be recorded accordingly. And, if it passes, it would be recorded as approved under the circumstances.

Vice Chair Vella asked Mr. Davidson to frame the motion. Mr. Davidson recommended that the Chair call for a motion to approve the recommendation for an endorsement of the item presented by the Provost. Vice Chair Vella asked for such a motion. Student Trustee Miller so moved, seconded by Vice Chair Vella. The committee chair responsibility was passed to Student Trustee Miller, who, as temporary Chair, called the motion. The motion was approved.

Vice Chair Vella then reassumed the responsibility of chairing the meeting.

Agenda Item 7.b. – Request for Degree Authority at Regional Site

Provost Legg stated that this request was for degree authority to offer a master's degree in education with a bilingual emphasis in Region 10. Dr. Legg asked Dr. Virginia Cassidy to brief the Board on this request.

Dr. Cassidy stated that this request was to deliver the Master of Science in Education in Elementary Education degree with an endorsement in English as a Second Language and Bilingual Education in IBHE Region 10, which is Chicago. This degree program is the same one the university currently offers on campus as well as at other regional sites where approval has been received. The delivery of this program was requested by the Chicago Public Schools to help prepare numerous teachers for permanent certification as elementary school teachers. The Department of Teaching and Learning has just completed the delivery of this program at Naperville to two cohorts of students. What they plan to do is move the program, with the approval of the Board of Trustees and the Illinois Board of Higher Education,

to the City of Chicago. The allocation of resources that were used in Naperville will, therefore, be transferred to the delivery of the program in the Chicago area in Region 10.

The university, therefore, recommends that the Committee endorse this request for off-campus degree authority for the Master of Science in Elementary Education in Region 10 and ask that the President forward it by means of his report to the Board of Trustees for approval at its March 18 meeting.

Vice Chair Vella asked for a motion to approve the request for off-campus degree authority for the Master of Science in Elementary Education in Region 10. Student Trustee Miller so moved, seconded by Vice Chair Vella. The motion was approved.

Agenda Item 7.c. – Request for New Emphases

This item for new emphases entails a reconfiguration of the Bachelor of Science degree in Technology. By definition, Provost Legg said, if you request a reconfiguration, you have to put in a new one and eliminate the one that was in place before, and they are presented in that order. Virginia Cassidy will elaborate on them.

As the Provost has indicated, Dr. Cassidy said, this is a reconfiguration or reorganization of the Bachelor of Science degree in Technology. Currently, that degree has an emphasis in engineering technology. Within that emphasis, students have three areas of study that they can pursue – electrical engineering technology, manufacturing engineering technology and nuclear engineering technology. The request comes because the specialty within the engineering technology degree that the students pursue is not noted on their transcripts. Therefore, it is buried, and their specific knowledge and skills are not brought forward on the transcript. The department requests that the areas of study within the existing emphasis be elevated to the level of emphases. Three emphases would be created: the emphasis in electrical engineering technology, manufacturing engineering technology and nuclear engineering technology. The course work and the requirements for these emphases are embedded in the areas of study that are currently in place; no new resources would be needed to implement this change and there would be no cost saving as a result of making this change. The university recommends that the Committee endorse the requests for these three new emphases and ask that the President forward them by means of his report to the Board of Trustees for approval at its March 18 meeting.

Vice Chair Vella asked for a motion to approve the request for new emphases in electrical engineering technology, manufacturing engineering technology and nuclear engineering technology within the Bachelor of Science degree in Technology. Student Trustee Miller so moved, seconded by Vice Chair Vella. The motion was approved.

Agenda Item 7.d. – Request to Delete an Emphasis

With the approval of these three new emphases, Dr. Cassidy said, it is appropriate to delete the existing Emphasis in Engineering Technology. We recommend that the Committee endorse the request to delete the existing emphasis in Engineering Technology and ask that the President forward it by means of his report to the Board of Trustees for its approval at the March 18 meeting. Vice Chair Vella asked for a motion to delete the Emphasis in Engineering Technology. Student Trustee Miller so moved, seconded by Vice Chair Vella. The motion was approved.

Agenda Item 7.e. – Higher Learning Commission Accreditation Update

The next item is a pleasure to bring to the table, Provost Legg said. The Higher Learning Commission Accreditation site visit took place lead by Virginia Cassidy, and I would like her to give you the report on the outcomes of that visit. Well, we had a very successful and grueling site visit, Dr. Cassidy said. There were many people across the university who were involved in meeting with the team members. There were ten members from the Higher Learning Commission site visitor core on campus for three days at the end of February, and they interacted with faculty and staff from all areas of the university to get the information they needed to make their recommendation.

First of all, President Peters said, I want to thank Virginia and Jan Rentala who chaired the steering committee that for approximately two years has been laboring to make the request to the Higher Learning

Commission of the North Central Association for another full ten years of accreditation. We have tried to make the point in our public communications that this is a very important event in the life of any university, because accreditation is the seal of approval for our programs and how we operate our governance structures, our fiscal control, our integrity and our ethics; that the university is straightforward in what it says it does, can do so effectively and has the resources to do so from the point of view of the quality of our faculty, our administration and our fiscal resources, and the way we recruit students and graduates. It was a complete look. And, the self-study that was put together was extremely thorough, and it gives one an excellent description of this university as well as a self-analysis of where we are and where we need to go. It is a time when our university can take stock of where it is and plan for the future. The other thing is we bring to campus a dozen or so leading experts from various areas represented in the university – student affairs, academics, finance, facilities, faculty relations, governance, outreach – from universities across the country to come and read the documents and then intensely observe us in three days. So, the President said, the challenge is always to present yourself and to convince this group of people, in three days, and with documents, that we deserve reaccreditation. I, for one, never thought for a moment that reaccreditation would be in doubt.

The other interesting thing about this visit, President Peters said, is that the chair of the external committee that reviewed us was part of the committee that was here for the last ten-year accreditation. The takeoff point for reaccreditation is “weaknesses,” and I put that in quotes, for they are not really weaknesses, but things that needed to be worked on ten years ago and then observed ten years later. That is the starting point. The chair of this committee, in an informal way, indicated to me that this is a different institution than it was ten years ago. She was stunned by the development of our physical plant, by our quality, our growth, our sense of purpose and where we’re going. And that made me feel very, very good, because we clearly are a much different institution qualitywise and scopewise, than we were ten years ago. Where we were ten years ago was not all that bad. It is just that we are different, and we play at a different level now. We play at the highest level of public universities in the country, where I do not think that was particularly true ten years ago.

So, all of these things are recommendations, the President said. We will get a report as indicated in about a month. Full ten-year accreditation has been recommended, and sometime later this summer or fall we will hear about our recommended full ten-year accreditation. We do have to file a report on student assessment, which is the recommendation, because perhaps we did not do the best job in portraying that our student assessment is there. This is really not a problem. There is always something that has to be done. We will be recommended for a full ten year’s accreditation where every criterion in our request has been met. And I want to thank Virginia, again, and the whole community, because hundreds of people were interviewed – students, faculty, staff and trustees were involved. So, it is sort of like, when you’re my age and you get a clear annual checkup from your physician, you can look ahead to the future. And that is what we will do now. I would like, in ten years, for the next group to look at the institution and say, wow, this is a different looking institution than ten years ago and that we will rise to even greater levels.

I was trying to think of what it was that most impressed me in the input that we got from the visiting group, Dr. Legg commented. At the closing session where they were giving us their analysis of what we were doing, one of them, who is a vice president for student affairs at another major university, commented that she had walked around campus, stopped at bus stops, talked to the students at various places, went into the bowling alley and talked to students there and other places. She said that she received uniformly strong support for what the students thought they were getting out of the university. And that is the bottom line for why we are here, he said. It was very satisfying to get that kind of input.

Some of the Trustees met with her as well, Vice Chair Vella said, and none of the staff were present. She also told us that she felt this was a different institution in a positive way. So, I am just reiterating the remarks Dr. Peters made that she was very positive, and we were very heartened by that.

Agenda Item 7.f. – Fiscal Year 2004 Increment Summary Report

Provost Legg asked Dr. Steve Cunningham to brief the Board on the FY04 Increment Summary. I am very pleased to report on this item, Dr. Cunningham said, because it represents substantial progress and commitment to our faculty and staff from the Trustees and the President and the administration. The

Fiscal Year 2004 increment guidelines were approved by the Board in June of last year. Following that, two 1.5 percent increment distributions were made to three categories: faculty; exempt employees, which consists of exempt supportive professional staff and civil service salaried employees; and hourly civil service. That resulted in a 3.0 percent base annualized increment for faculty and staff. Then, as the year progressed, with an uncertain budget, we were able to also implement, under the plus category, an additional 3.0 percent increment for our civil service clerical employees, which represents about half of the hourly civil service category. For those employees, that resulted in a total 6.0 percent increment effective January 1, 2004. In total, the increment program is costed out at 3.4 percent, which is competitive with any increment program that was implemented throughout Illinois higher education this year. I also note that this was a year of budget reduction, not budget increase, he said, so this was all done through internal reallocation.

Thank you for your work in analyzing where our various employee groups are and keeping us informed almost in real time, President Peters said. We appreciate that very much, and I know all the employee groups do as well.

Agenda Item 7.g. – Annual Report on Oral English Proficiency 2002-2003

We are required to file a report annually on oral English proficiency in our teaching assistants, Provost Legg said, and show that we have responded to any concerns or complaints that have been raised. This year the report includes ten complaints in six departments and the responses made to them.

As the Provost indicated, Dr. Cassidy reported, under Public Act 84-1434, the public universities in Illinois are required to insure that individuals who provide instruction in the classroom are proficient in English. Northern Illinois University takes several steps to make sure that this requirement is met. One step is the requirement for individuals to achieve a minimum score on the Test of Spoken English. In addition to that, we have facilities and services that can provide assistance to individuals whose first language is not English in the clinics that we have on campus – the English as a Second Language Clinic in the Department of English and also in the Speech-Language-Hearing Clinic in the Department of Communicative Disorders. In addition, we have a standardized procedure for the documentation of student complaints concerning English proficiency of the faculty and teaching assistants in the classroom.

Agenda Item 7.h. – Annual IBHE Report on Underrepresented Groups 2002-2003

We are asked annually by the IBHE to file a report on how we address the needs of the underrepresented groups on our campus, Provost Legg said. As has been commonly done, a particular area or group is selected on which to report, and this particular report is on how we serve students with disabilities. It is very interesting to note that we are very strong in this area and have done quite well. So, it was a pleasure to read the report and see how we have done this very important job. Dr. Legg asked Dr. Cassidy to elaborate on the report.

For approximately 20 years, the Illinois Board of Higher Education has required that institutions submit a report on underrepresented groups on their campuses. This year, Dr. Cassidy said, the focus was on services provided to individuals with disabilities, both staff and students. The report outlines very clearly the breadth of the support available through our Center for Accessibility Resources as well as other areas in the university from Information Technology Services that provides adaptive technologies for the use of computers, to accommodation that is made for students in terms of testing, translators and interpreters for students to assist them with their class work, and more. In addition, we also report on other broad areas related to budgeting and the resources allocated to serve underrepresented groups and the extent of the appropriations we have made to provide the services to support our students and staff from underrepresented groups.

Vice Chair Vella inquired whether ADD, ADHD or other kinds of learning disorders were included in the underrepresented groups category. Dr. Cassidy stated that it included all kinds of disabilities. In fact, she said, learning disabilities represent the largest category of disabilities identified or reported by our students. When students apply, they identify themselves as having a disability and then work primarily through the Center for Accessibility Resources to set up a program to deliver the services they need for their disability, be it a physical disability, a sensory disability or a learning disability. Dr. Gresholdt elaborated saying that students with disabilities are informed about the services provided when they apply

to the university. They must self-identify if they wish to access those services, and they are required to provide documentation of the services they need. Once that documentation is provided, the Center for Accessibility Resources works with the student to provide appropriate accommodations for that individual student's specific disability.

I would like to put this underrepresented report focusing on students with disabilities in some context for the Board and for the campus community, President Peters said. It is time to emphasize this particular group, because other underrepresented groups were reported on in the past. The current chair of the Illinois Board of Higher Education, I think it is safe to say, has a deep concern for students with disabilities. And I share that concern, as do all of the presidents, chancellors and public academic community. I think the presumption of the chair is that we are not doing enough, collectively, as institutions to meet the needs of these students. And that means going beyond mere compliance with all the various state and federal regulations and requirements to provide more programs for these students rather than the minimum accommodation. I will try to paraphrase what I have heard from him. There is a committee, and I believe NIU has some representation from experts in this area, because NIU is clearly a leader in this area and is looked to for advice and support. This committee is looking at this at the IBHE level. The other part of this that gets a little more confusing is that the chair of IBHE believes that the percentages of students with disabilities that are reported from all of the public universities are not an accurate reflection of the number of students in the population who need these services. None of this is negative with respect to NIU. It is a very positive and good story for us, and I am proud of what we have done. But that is the context. This is more than just an annual report focusing on a set of underrepresented students. There is real concern on the part of the IBHE and its chair and all of public higher education. And I just wanted to go on record saying how proud I am of what we do, and we need to do more.

NEXT MEETING DATE

Chair Vella announced that the next Committee meeting would be announced at a later date and members will be notified. The next full Board Meeting is scheduled for Thursday, March 18, in the Clara Sperling Sky Room.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no Other Matters, Vice Chair Vella asked for a motion to adjourn. Student Trustee Miller so moved, seconded by Vice Chair Vella. The motion was approved.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:44 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Sharon M. Mimms
Recording Secretary