

Minutes of the
NIU Board of Trustees
**ACADEMIC AFFAIRS, STUDENT AFFAIRS
AND PERSONNEL COMMITTEE**
June 2, 2004

CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

The meeting was called to order by Chair Robert Boey at 9:10 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 Trustee Barbara Giorgi Vella, Student Trustee Kevin Miller and Chair 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

Confirmation of Open Meetings Act notification compliance was given by Board Parliamentarian Ken Davidson.

MEETING AGENDA APPROVAL

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

REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF MINUTES

It was moved by Student Trustee Miller and seconded by Trustee Vella to approve the minutes of the March 4, 2004 meeting. The motion was approved.

CHAIR'S COMMENTS

We have a short agenda, today, Chair Boey said. We will be discussing two action items, Recommendations for Faculty Promotions, Tenure, and Promotions with Tenure for the 2004-2005 Academic Year and a Request for New Specialization. Also we will be discussing the 2003-2004 Program Review Summary, a very interesting process in which every program is reviewed at least once every eight years for quality, need, etc.

I would like to recognize the University Advisory Committee representatives who are here today, Dr. Paul Loubere and Dr. William Tolhurst. We are present today, Dr. Loubere stated, particularly to support our colleagues who have been through all the necessary formalities and are now up for promotion and tenure. I would like to second what my colleague has said, Dr. Tolhurst said. It is important to keep in mind not only the importance of tenure as a support for academic freedom, but also as a way of maintaining superior faculty in fields where they could command higher salaries outside academia by providing them with a certain amount of job security. Maintaining the Colleges of Business and Engineering seems to me to depend, especially, on being able to provide the faculty in those colleges with the kind of job security they would not have on the outside.

We look forward to a good discussion on that subject, Chair Boey said, because it is a worthwhile subject to revisit every year, especially for the definition of tenure which at times has been misunderstood by people outside of academia. And it is important that we redefine it for everybody's understanding of what it really means to the university.

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 Promotions, Tenure and Promotions with Tenure for the 2004-2005 Academic Year

This is the time of year we make the recommendations to the Board for the tenure and promotion candidates, Dr. Legg said. I wanted to make a few comments about it before we make the formal recommendation. Now that I am in my third cycle of sabbatical leave recommendations, I have become reasonably familiar with the process, and there are a number of things that I have observed. Number one, it is very faculty intensive. All the way through, the committees that make the decisions and recommendations to the various academic leaders on the university roster are all faculty-intensive. I chair the University Council Personnel Committee (UCPC), which deals with the final stage of the recommendations. I have worked with UCPC's made up of faculty, and I am a nonvoting chair of that group. The faculty I have worked with over the last three years have been very impressive. They give a lot of thought to their considerations and the recommendations they make and the votes that they take. The process from the date we hire a faculty member to the final stage in their sixth year, when they are considered for tenure and promotion, is very thorough and very consistent.

Finally, the Provost said, I would like to observe that when we make these tenure and promotion decisions, we are making decisions that have a profound influence on the future of the university, because we will be gone when these faculty are still serving.

Therefore, the university requests that the Academic Affairs, Student Affairs and Personnel Committee endorse the university's 2004-2005 tenure and promotion decisions and ask the President to forward them by means of the President's Report to the Board of Trustees for approval at its June 17 meeting.

For the record, Student Trustee Miller said, I am required by state law and the Board *Bylaws* to abstain from voting on this issue. Even though Student Trustees are not allowed to vote on these matters, Provost Legg said, you do, as students, have a profound impact on the future of our faculty.

In my preliminary meeting with Dr. Legg and Dr. Cassidy, Chair Boey said, one statement was made regarding tenure that I liked very much. Dr. Legg said it is important to define tenure in such a way that tenure is not a goal, because people think once you reach your goal, then you have met your goal and you can back off. Tenure is a statement of achievement. It says that your quality, your talent, your skills, everything combined constitutes an achievement worthy of recognition. And I thought that was a very important definition, especially for people outside the academic world.

Chair Boey asked for a motion to approve the Recommendations for Faculty Promotions, Tenure, and Promotions with Tenure for the 2004-2005 Academic Year. Trustee Vella so moved, seconded by Student Trustee Miller. A roll call vote was as follows.

Trustee Vella..... Yes Student Trustee MillerAbstain Chair Boey..... Yes

The motion was approved.

Agenda Item 7.b. – Request for New Specialization

The Department of Teaching and Learning, which is housed in the College of Education, has proposed the creation of a new specialization within its master's degree in Special Education, Dr. Cassidy said. The title of this specialization is Advanced Special Education Practices, and it is designed to serve classroom teachers who have to meet continuing education requirements for their recertification, but it also would provide them with an opportunity to complete a master's degree in special education, which would enhance their classroom skills and the work they are doing with the students in their classrooms.

The course work for this specialization would be taken primarily within the Department of Teaching and Learning. The proposal is an important one. It would give students expertise in developing curriculum for students who have special needs and on using technology more effectively in working with students with disabilities. The college has made it a priority by budgeting to fill a position in Special Education that has been vacant for the last academic year in order to implement this specialization. The university requests that the committee endorse this request and ask the President to forward it by means of his report to the Board of Trustees for approval at its June 17 meeting.

As I understand it, Chair Boey said, as a specialization, it will be specifically noted on the certificate of the graduate so that employers who are looking for particular needs will be able to see this qualification. That is correct, Dr. Cassidy said. When we create constellations of courses such as specializations within the degree programs, that notation would be made on the student's transcript, where it would be very visible to employers. In this case, employers will know not only that these students have a master's degree in special education, but that they have a specialization in advanced practices related to special education curriculum or technology usage. It also recognizes a growing need for more complex and technically competent people to deal with these issues, which are very demanding in terms of the needs of students with special disabilities, Provost Legg said.

Chair Boey asked for a motion to approve the request for a new specialization within the Master's in Special Education. Trustee Vella so moved, seconded by Student Trustee Miller. The motion was approved.

Agenda Item 7.c. – 2003-04 Program Review Summary

Our last item is the 2003-2004 Program Review summary, Provost Legg said, with which I have become quite familiar through my participation in the review process. It starts in the summer, goes on throughout the year and is finally concluded at this time of year. It is a real labor of love because the program reviews involve a lot of preparation by the units being considered as well as consideration by a faculty committee that reviews each program in detail. This is the first time I have been with a university that has done this review systematically, and I am very impressed with it.

As Provost Legg mentioned, Dr. Cassidy said, this is a summary of program reviews that were conducted during the last academic year. The Academic Planning Council conducted a review of 13 graduate and undergraduate programs in mathematics and in several areas of education. This is a rigorous process. The departments prepare a self-study or a report on the program that addresses all facets of the program from resources available to support the instructional needs of the students and the academic and scholarly work of faculty to measures of outcomes that include enrollments and degrees awarded, student success after graduation, program costs and the currency of the curriculum, and, for those programs that are accredited, a status report on the results of the last accreditation review.

The process starts by conducting a meeting with the Provost's staff to review the first drafts of the documents and to look at data that is provided by Institutional Research on enrollments and costs, Dr. Cassidy explained. Those data also provide a basis for comparison to other programs in the state, both at public institutions and at private colleges. After that meeting, based on the recommendations of the Provost's staff, the reports are revised if needed and then they are submitted to the Academic Planning Council, which is a faculty body that conducts a peer review of all the programs. Following that review, any recommendations from the council are incorporated into the final drafts of the reports that are submitted to the Provost's Office. We then report a very brief overview of the findings of those reviews to the Board of Trustees before we forward them to the IBHE with our performance report, which we will do in August.

In reply to a question from Trustee Vella, Dr. Cassidy stated that the review is sent to the IBHE in a slightly different format, but many of the same information points are included because they are interested in the enrollment trends that we have seen over the eight-year period, degrees awarded, program costs and outcomes, particularly related to students' success upon graduation. The reports usually average about 25 to 30 pages for each program.

Curricular changes and the creation of new emphases or specializations can result from the program reviews, Dr. Cassidy said, but that is not the only source of the creation of these new curricular components. Other things that affect the creation of new programs or deletion of old ones include changing trends in the discipline, the input from advisory committees about skills that alumni need to be successful in the workplace, the results of accreditation. There are many sources that feed into the decisions that the faculty make about the new curricular options that are created for the students.

This is part of the whole accountability process, Trustee Vella said. Because I know this self-study can be very demanding, how do you keep everybody interested in wanting to do this instead of doing what was done before?

One of the things I think the deans and the chairs would agree on, Dr. Cassidy said, is that taking the opportunity to sit down and do a very in-depth, thorough review of the resources in the department as well as the programs provides a very positive reflection of what has been happening. You do not see the accumulation of the changes and the refinements in programs that have occurred when you simply reflect over the last semester or the last year. So taking this opportunity to look at a longer time frame and say this is all the information we have gathered, this is the input we have gotten, these are the changes that we have made along the way, provides a point where it is more effective to start thinking about what the future will be. And the last part of each of the program reviews is a section about future plans that may have been initiated and are still in process or things that, as a result of this review, the programs might contemplate from discussions with the Provost's staff or with the members of the Academic Planning Council. So, it is a culminating point in many ways, and the departments find it helpful.

President Peters stated that Trustee Vella has raised some very good questions. My experience after many years of being involved in academic program reviews is that there is a certain frustration on the part of departments because a lot of time is spent in the preparation of the materials and the evaluation, and then it is done. Things are identified such as an area's need for improvement whether it be physical space, too many students, not enough students, the need for more senior faculty, the need for a specialization, as well as the identification of some weaknesses. How many degrees have we granted over the last year? Should we expand a department, contract a department, bring on a new specialization? Is new leadership needed? Is new space needed? And should programs be benchmarked? For instance, it is not our norm here to have external reviewers, which is commonly done across the country, to get some validation of where that department fits nationally based on the correct peer group. That is an expensive proposition, but my view is that if we are going to do this once every eight years, why not invest in that process. We have not been able to make that investment because of the budget, but we are going to work on it. Based upon the direction the university is going and the things we want to emphasize, there ought to be a calibration of the departments. Using my department, political science, where does political science fit nationally? How does it rank on all measures? This is going to be even more important in the future with what are obviously new attempts on the part of IBHE to do program evaluation. We have a very good process in place that is going to serve us well, and I think we can make it even better.

And lastly, the President said, I just want to say that yesterday something very important happened that is related to program review on a grand scale. Provost Legg and Dr. Cassidy came to my office to present to me an analysis of the final report of the review committee that was here for our Higher Learning Commission ten-year reaccreditation, and the report was even better than the oral exit report, which was quite good. The Higher Learning Commission acts on these recommendations, and they offered us the easy way to respond to their review, which is to have only two people review the recommendations of the Higher Learning Commission site committee that will then make recommendations to the full commission. There is virtually nothing in the report that is not exemplary. There were probably 128 people involved. And so, once again, he said, I want to thank, particularly, Dr. Cassidy for getting us through this.

There was one point you made that I would like to respond to about the external reviewers, Dr. Cassidy said. Quite a number of our programs are accredited and we do have external site teams that come to campus for those programs the same way the site team came from the Higher Learning Commission to review the university. Those individuals provide us with an outside eye on the quality of our programs. In addition, I would say virtually every department in the university has some type of an external advisory

committee, comprised of alumni or a combination of alumni and individuals within the profession, that provides input to the departments and the programs about curricular needs.

The last point I wanted to make, Dr. Cassidy said, is that for our doctoral programs, the Graduate School works with the department to solicit a sample of dissertations that students have completed over the review period, and working with the chairs and the faculty, select experts within the area of the students' research and then send those dissertations out to those experts at other institutions, and those individuals provide us with their evaluation of the individual dissertation reports. All that information then becomes incorporated into the program review documents.

I would just also like to note that in comparing my past experiences at three other institutions in three other states, Provost Legg said, Illinois by far is a review state like I have never seen before. And I have never had a whole office that is dedicated to dealing with reviews.

Also, Trustee Boey said, it is important to note that the eight-year cycle is not the final step. In between those eight years, there are a lot of intermittent steps that are continually in process for each of the programs within their own department.

The programs solicit input from students who are graduating, Dr. Cassidy said. The faculty conduct regular curricular reviews. The University Assessment Panel asks for regular reports of evidence that students have met the outcomes for the program. All that information is used to present this culminating report. So, the process of review is ongoing, primarily at the department level; but with accreditation, other entities get involved. So there are other opportunities to take a step back and look at what has happened either over the program review cycle or the accreditation cycle.

NEXT MEETING DATE

Chair Boey said 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, June 17, in the Clara Sperling Sky Room.

ADJOURNMENT

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

The meeting was adjourned at 9:43 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Sharon M. Mimms
Recording Secretary