

Minutes of the  
**NIU Board of Trustees**  
**Of Northern Illinois University**  
**Special Meeting**  
June 28, 2017

**1. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL**

The meeting was called to order at 8:33 a.m. by Board Chair John Butler in the Board of Trustees Room, 315 Altgeld Hall. Recording Secretary Kathleen Carey conducted a roll call. Members present were Trustees Dennis Barsema, Robert Boey, Matthew Holmes, Tim Struthers, Eric Wasowicz, and Board Chair John Butler. Members absent Trustees Wheeler Coleman and Veronica Herrero. Also present: Dr. Lisa Freeman, Executive Vice President and Provost, Board Liaison Matt Streb, Acting General Counsel Greg Brady, Acting Chief Financial Officer Larry Pinkelton, Chris McCord, UAC Representatives Greg Long, Cathy Doederlein, Kendall Thu, Linda Saborio, and Holly Nicholson.

**2. VERIFICATION OF QUORUM AND APPROPRIATE NOTICE OF PUBLIC MEETING**

General Counsel Brady indicated the appropriate notification of the meeting has been provided pursuant to the Illinois Open Meetings Act. Mr. Brady also advised that a quorum was present.

**3. MEETING AGENDA APPROVAL**

Chair Butler asked for a motion to approve the meeting agenda. Trustee Wasowicz so moved and Trustee Holmes seconded. The motion was approved.

**4. CHAIR'S COMMENTS/ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Chair Butler began, this is my last meeting as chair. I have a few things I would like to say that I think are relevant to today's meeting and some questions that have been posed to the Board. Let me first say a few things about the results of the 360 review. The Board is immensely grateful to the many respondents who participated in the 360 review and I want to assure the NIU community that the feedback will continue to be useful in the Board's formation of its expectations and aspirations for the NIU presidency. The 360 results were presented to the Board during closed session on May 18th. The consultants consolidated feedback according to themes of what the president has done well during his tenure and opportunities that the president could consider going forward. The Board members questioned the consultants to derive a deeper understanding of the components, including compliments, aspirations, concerns that informed the summary statements. A written executive summary was promised as part of that project and this was received two weeks ago, on June 15<sup>th</sup>, and will be attached to what we produce to document our evaluation activities overall which we plan to release by the end of this week. The executive summary was prepared by Greenwood/Asher, the firm that performed the 360 review, and no alterations were requested or made by NIU leadership including the Board. Second, let me address the 2017 performance evaluation overall. The 360 review provided data that was considered by the Board in its evaluation of the president's performance. This data and the results of our additional evaluation activities will continue to be useful to the Board as we chart a path with the Acting President and grapple with many of the same challenges and opportunities. For about three weeks, the board has been focused primarily on the transition of the presidency. This weekend I was able to return to the evaluation and determine, in conjunction and consultation with several Board members, a suitable format for documenting the Board's evaluation activities for a president with whom the Board has reached a mutual agreement that affected his separation with the university. The Board is very close to a final draft of a memorandum that documents out 2017

evaluation activities and, as I said, we plan to release this before the end of the week. Third, over the next several weeks, my successor Trustee Coleman will be leading an effort of the Board to work with the Acting President, Dr. Lisa Freeman, to review several sources of information concerning the future of NIU and establish goals for FY18 and beyond. This activity will track closely our evaluation engagements with the outgoing president where we discussed NIU's current state environment, the essential characteristics of the present moment in terms of higher education nationally and within the state of Illinois, and more significantly the institutions most significant threats, strategic resources and opportunities for effectiveness. We will discuss with Dr. Freeman NIU's performance within this environment concerning key measures such as enrollment, new freshmen, new transfers, first year retention rates, graduation rates, and financial stability as well as important distinctions between NIU's mission and scope and that of its peer institutions. To encourage deliberation and refinement of Dr. Freeman's planned areas of focus and expected outcomes, we will explore some of the expectations and goals of Board members and we will take stock of key expectations Board members have formed over the past academic term particularly more recent objectives. I believe that will result in the following determinations at minimum that we will execute a productive recruitment strategy; that we will implement cost reduction and program realignment strategies to address fiscal headwinds; that we will continue the development of a shared comprehensive vision that details NIU's value proposition and differentiates NIU from other colleges and universities in Illinois; and that we will continue process improvements and attention to compliance protocols. These significant challenges and opportunities and others will require that NIU leverage its talents and creativity of its university leaders, faculty, staff, students, alumni, and allies. Finally, let me close by saying that the Board is immensely confident and excited about the leadership of Lisa Freeman. We're excited to welcome the first female into the presidency in NIU's 118 year existence, a historical milestone of no small consequence. Dr. Freeman's capacity to step into this role stems from a culture of inclusion and respect for talent that she and others have been nurturing for many years. For many observing this moment, this is also an achievement rooted in the pioneering work of female faculty, administrators, and staff and the legacy of many female students who have studied at NIU. This is also a time for us to unite in common purpose and move forward and Dr. Freeman is the right person to lead NIU in that direction. She's already presided over some of the most challenging soul searching this institution has seen as it undertook a large and comprehensive effort to exam all academic and administrative programs that make up the university. We have more work to do on this front and she's the right person to lead that work. And as we are continuing to learn, Dr. Freeman has widespread support across NIU constituencies. Board members have heard from multiple sources that she has demonstrated a strong commitment to NIU students, personnel, and mission. We appreciate the feedback and we have formed the same positive opinions. Finally, Dr. Freeman is the ideal advocate for NIU at a time when we need an articulate and informed voice on campus, in our home community, in the Chicagoland area, our regional neighbors and neighboring communities, among our alumni and supportive donors, in Springfield, nationally and internationally. She will be joined in this advocacy effort by this Board as we intend to be more visible and involved in dialog as we seek to increase confidence and make thousands of NIU stakeholders proud to be affiliated with NIU. Now I will ask my friends and partners in shared governance, the members of the University Advisory Committee to the Board of Trustees, if they have any comments for this board.

Greg Long began, good morning and welcome trustees. Thank you for your ongoing service to the university. It's greatly appreciated. I would also offer best wishes and support to Acting President Lisa Freeman. I'm one of many faculty who have lots of confidence in her ability to lead the university forward. I did have lengthy notes prepared and, on my way to work today, I decided to change them. It's one of those things, I will be an emeritus professor in three days and, for those of you who don't know what that means, it's a fancy word for retired. This will be my last opportunity to talk to you in my role as Executive Secretary of University Council and Faculty Senate President. So I'm going to make this more personal and start with letting you know that I'm a warrior and, if I were being an academic, I would say that I'm a professor who identifies a problem and focuses on it intently and frequently, and from many different perspectives; but, the reality is I worry, and over the past two years and especially the past seven months, a lot of my worry is focused on the shared governance and direction and discussions related to President Baker. When President Baker offered his resignation during the June 15th board meeting, one of my worries

abated. Specifically, the president identified himself as a source of distraction and that he was the focus of many Freedom of Information Act requests. I agree with that. This was a mistake on my part, however. In fact, subsequent to his resignation there's been an increase in the number of FOIA requests offered to the university. Please understand, I agree with the value of transparency and holding public officials to expected codes of conduct. Overall, I strongly support the use of FOIA to protect the public. There can however be abuses of the system. NIU, for example, has had more FOIA requests than any other state university other than the University of Illinois, and Illinois is twice the size of NIU. Also, the number of requests have increased over each of the past three years. There is a sense that some of the requests are more focused on fishing than answering specific questions. So, as the university moves forward I would ask that future FOIA requests be targeted to specific concerns, that there is a red flag associated with rather than just doing fishing. In my opinion, it would be much productive to spend money on a policy librarian than it would be to continue and try to identify the mistakes of the past. I would also offer my support for the Board of Trustees. Most of you are new and were not here when the OEIG problems took place. I know your dedication to the university; this is not something you're getting paid for. But, because these are unprecedented times, I would ask that the Board and the faculty, staff, and students rethink how we operate. We need to change the narrative about NIU. Although we cannot control media or public opinion, we can move forward toward increased trust and collaboration between the Board, administration, faculty, staff, students, and community. Demonstrating proactive solutions to our challenges represents an effective way to demonstrate our strengths and boost our image to the public. Toward this end, I have three suggestions: First, relationship building. I've been here for 26 years and for the vast majority of my time the Board of Trustee meetings were mysteries to me. Alright, it was something that, as a typical faculty member I thought had no opportunity to participate. I should have investigated more, but, if we can, we need to work on relationship building such that people know they can come and make public comments. We do have people come and make public comments right now and it's often times a fairly typical group. I'm challenging the faculty, staff, and students to also be individuals who come and make public comments, as well, because this need not be a public comment only for complaints about the university. There are opportunities to offer suggestions, positive comments, create again a new narrative, a new image for how the university operates. I would also challenge the Board of Trustees. I know that you're busy, but you need to know more of us. By that I mean the typical faculty members, those who are part of Operating Staff Council, SPS Council, the Student Association, the University Council, Faculty Senate and I know that you can come individually or in groups of two. I would strongly encourage you to come and meet with the governing bodies so you have a sense of what we're doing and what we think is important. The final thing that I would mention is, if we are truly to collaborate and not just a yes vote for you, I would say let's identify specific goals that we can collaborate on. If we're going to work together, we can't just amorphously say yes the university is in trouble and we need to do things, but let's look at specific goals that faculty and staff can work together to be of assistance to you. For example, the one thing, because again it's my last opportunity to say so, please not only deal with the policy library but codify the policies that deal with the selection and review of the president. Let's not have multiple policies that deal with those things. This is an opportunity given that status quo is being disrupted, let's take advantage and move forward on those things. So thank you for this opportunity. I wish the Board as well as everyone in this room the best of luck and success helping moving NIU through this most difficult time. Thank you.

Kendall Thu, Department of Anthropology, commented, I just want to echo a couple of things that I said to Chair Butler and Trustee Barsema last Friday during our lengthy conversation, which I thought was very informative and it helped to build the trust in relationships that Greg is talking about. I want to echo the support for President Freeman. I also want to support Dean McCord becoming Interim Provost and support my colleague Mark Cordes as interim head of the College of Law. I also want to say that I look forward to the selection process for the next president as being more open than it was the last time. I think in this environment it's particularly important that the final candidates be made public, that they be brought to campus, and that they be vetted thoroughly with all stakeholders. I want to thank the Board, and I want to thank all my colleagues who, in these tough times, in these demoralizing times, are doing their jobs and working with our students and doing all that we're supposed to do and more. When the last Provost search was entered into, one of the candidates asked what differentiates NIU from any other university and I said

I will put NIU's ability to have compassion and caring for students against any other university in this country. I don't care whether they're an Ivy League school or Stanford or whomever. We take care of our students and we attend to their needs and I'm very proud of that.

Cathy Doederlein commented, thank you as always for the opportunity to comment today. When we last met, my colleagues and I from shared governance noted how much of a challenge it can be to try to speak for such broad constituencies. Inevitably, with such a large group represented, there are going to be divergent opinions. That's to be expected and it's not a bad thing, but it can make it hard to try to best speak on behalf of our colleagues. However, as we've had a bit of time since the last meeting to digest things and also to formally seek out input from our colleagues, I took the opportunity to ask members of my Supportive Professional Staff Council to speak with the constituents they represent and provide feedback on what they were hearing. As I suspected would be the case, the comments were wide ranging in their scope. Some had comments about the outgoing president's compensation package, some gave feedback on President Baker's performance, some commented on Lisa Freeman's proposed contract, some speculated on who should be provost, some shared concerns about the state budget. The comments and questions from my constituents were so wide ranging that I'd like to share just a few of them that I feel best represent the cross section of comments I was hearing. One person noted, people in my office seemed less concerned about President Baker's final contract and Lisa Freeman's compensation and more concerned about continuing the good work President Baker began at acknowledging his accomplishments. \$30,000 for general expenses, that's more than I make in salary for a full year. Another person said that my concern is that Lisa Freeman would be able to get a performance bonus. This is hard to stomach given the fact that many of our colleagues are working harder than they have and are not being given raises or performance bonuses. I should note that I share those last compensation concerns not necessarily to belabor that point, but to just give an important reminder and context of what these dollar amounts mean to many of our staff, many of whom make well under \$30,000 a year. Others went on to say, what plans does the BOT have for addressing the many initiatives that Baker started and led? How can we make sure that things like program prioritization, connections with the community, leadership with diversity nationally, etc. continue? Others in commenting about the provost position asked will Chris McCord be selected as provost? He's the clear choice in my mind. Another noted I would think Dean McCord would be selected as the provost. His experience with NIU, from the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences and his work on program prioritization, will suit him well for the role. Lisa Freeman took a hit on salary. She's worth more than that, but, given the concerns regarding the outgoing president's compensation package, I applaud her that she doesn't take more there. We regret that we will lose President Baker, however Lisa Freeman is certainly a very competent individual. She will do her best. Somebody else said I support NIU in the manner in which this is being handled. Lisa Freeman's logical transition to Acting President will create the greatest stability going forward and makes good sense. In situations like this, I'm often compelled to try to find a common theme in the things I'm hearing, and finding a theme perhaps we could find some common ground that we can all build from. And the thing I noticed across absolutely every single person I heard from, whether they were providing feedback formally or just happen to catch me in passing, was a confidence in Provost Freeman and her ability to serve in the role of president and a desire to see her succeed, and I share that confidence. We all have a desire for NIU to move forward. Given the challenging times we face as an institution and as a state, I feel we are very fortunate to have two people ready and able serve us in the way that Lisa Freeman and Chris McCord are capable of doing. This will not be an easy task for either of them or for the university as a whole, but if we can strive to do something this university has had to do time and time again and move forward, together forward, we can and will win for NIU. Thank you.

Holly Nicholson, President of Operating Staff Council, commented, thank you again for the opportunity to speak today. I want to first offer my sincere congratulations to President Freeman and to Dean McCord. This week we will have our first female president and, as well, we'll have female presidents of the Faculty Senate, Operating Staff Council, SPS Council, Student Association, and the Speaker of the Senate. So I am excited for the future. I also reached out to my fellow Operating Staff council members to talk about how other constituents are feeling about the upcoming separation of Dr. Baker from the university and also, as can be expected, there are a lot of mixed feelings. Some still have questions which I hope I can discuss

with you at some point to gain clarity. Some are angry whether it's over the amount of money spent on the affiliate employees. For perspective, some of the salaries were ten to fifteen times what many staff members make annually. It could be the optics of the hiring situations or misinterpretations of leadership's reaction to the situation, and it will take time for those people to heal. Many are sad. Dr. Baker did a lot of good on campus and was supportive of many initiatives, and many are relieved. Tensions over the hires made at the beginning of Dr. Baker's time at NIU caused stress that is now over. They're ready to move on. How can we move forward? How can we take from what's happened and make positive headway? I'm going to share some of my own thoughts. For ten years I've been at NIU we've had to ask those questions as a university community over and over almost every year it seems. Sometimes terrible tragedies or actions at the state level occurred that were out of our control. A few times, actions of our own employees brought the negative spotlight on to NIU. I feel that every time that NIU starts to gain momentum we get kicked down and each time it gets harder and harder to get ahead again. Enrollment keeps declining and the state has appropriated less and less each year until now the funds are disappearing completely. Unfortunately, this has also eroded our campus climate. We're at a point where more employees discourage students to come here more than encourage them, according to the brand survey conducted by the Office of University Marketing. Where negativity has spread almost gleefully through the community both in-person and online where people waste incredible amounts of the university money and colleagues' times in their pursuit of tearing NIU down. This has to stop. Right now the few negative voices are drowning out the positive things going on at NIU and they're drowning out the dedicated employees who care passionately about the university. And maybe those employees are quieter because they're too busy providing quality education and services to students, or just the fact that negative news is naturally more sensational. But whatever it is, we need those positive voices to be louder. Let's talk about our incredible students and alumni. I hear so many stories about the good our students are doing in the world from helping those in need to new discoveries to entrepreneurship. Let's talk about the innovative NIU Plus programs which enrich our students' education. Let's talk about program prioritization and how the university is moving to be more fiscally responsible. Let's talk about award winning faculty and staff, our internship program, diversity inclusion efforts, P20 Network, community college partnerships, and so much more. Let's make the most of this new beginning and build trust with the new administration and board members through mutual respect and constructive and transparent communication. Those negative voices do not speak for all of us. They don't even speak for a majority, not by a long shot. If we're going to survive as an institution, we must unite as a community around the good things happening at NIU. I think what many don't realize is that every negative comment online, every piece of gossip spread in the community by someone affiliated by NIU magnifies exponentially and it means we're going to lose students and we're going to lose donors and then we all lose. I'll lay it out there. If we want jobs in a year, two years, five years, if the community wants to keep its greatest economic asset alive, we had better start convincing people of NIUs greatness and that means first discovering it for ourselves. So my encouragement to some of my colleagues across the university is to stop wasting energy, time, and resources, both your own and the university's, on sensationalism and direct it somewhere constructive. Nothing will change what happened over the past few years. Lessons have been learned and policies have been put into place so we can all move on and heal. And to others, start amplifying your positivity. Let's help NIU shine and get the message about how great this university is out there so loudly people won't help but be able to listen. Thank you.

## **5. PUBLIC COMMENT**

Chair Butler noted, we move now to public comment. We have one request to make public comment from Betsy Chronopolis. Ms. Chronopolis you're welcome to approach the podium and offer your remarks.

Betsy Chronopolis began, there is much to be said and I've sat here and I've listened to many of the comments. I'm an alum, I'm a DeKalb resident, I care about my community, I love NIU. NIU is a fine institution and it needs to center its energies around students, faculty, and staff. That's your job. That's your job to oversee that and make sure the leadership needs to be very strong and positive and I'm going to use this word that's been used over and over again, but not necessarily practiced, "transparent" -- it's got to be transparent, as "open as possible." That will solve a lot of your FOIA problems too, I believe. I'm

not going to say that I'm sad that Dr. Baker is leaving. Sometimes you have to change leadership in order to make progress. And, yes, the lady over there mentioned; you know something about negativity, well you need negativity and you need positivity. You need both. And what you need to do, this is as an educator, you learn from both, and if you don't it's like banging your head up against the wall over and over again and you're not gonna make progress. So you need to listen to the positive for sure, but you also need to listen to the negative, and have it not happen as much as possible. DeKalb recently experienced a change in leadership and it's good. It's a good thing to do. Things are going to be looked at from different points of view and people need to continue talking with each other. NIU is a premier institution but it is in trouble. Illinois is in trouble. We need to all sit down and talk together and learn from the mistakes in the past. Now there's part of me that would say that perhaps some members, or all members, of the BOT should resign and maybe there should be a total sweeping change in the whole university structure at the top level. That's not my decision. I don't know if that would be a good thing or a bad thing, but if you all, each and every one of you, have not learned from the experience that you have been going through these last couple three years, then we're gonna be really in trouble and that's not a good thing. NIU and DeKalb are inextricably joined together, forever and ever, and we do need to work together, but in a transparent fashion. So many people are here to help, and do listen to the negatives because people care. They speak out because they care. It's that simple and, John Butler, you taught me that a long time ago, and you know where I'm coming from. Transparency, honesty, integrity. NIU is worth it. I don't know what else to say other than strong, solid leadership and look and question every single thing that comes before you BOT. You've got to. Lisa, I don't know if I should congratulate you or send sympathy to you, or what, but yours is not going to be an easy battle. It's going to be very, very difficult, but think of NIU first and foremost and the DeKalb community too. Thank you.

## 6. CLOSED SESSION

Chair Butler noted, the Board needs to go into closed session now. We do plan to take up business after the closed session. Arrangements have been made for notifying those who are interested to learn when the Board is coming back into session and will be posted on screen.

Chair Butler asked for a motion to close the public meeting to conduct a closed session to discuss the following subjects authorized by the Illinois Open Meetings Act, as amended: personnel matters as generally described under sections 2(c)(1)(2)(3) and (21) of the Open Meetings Act, litigation and risk management matters and generally described under sections 2(c)(11) and (12) of the Open Meetings Act, and closed session minutes matters and generally described under sections 2(c)(21) of the Open Meetings Act.

Trustee Wasowicz so moved, seconded by Trustee Barsema. A roll call vote of the Trustees to recess to Closed Session was as follows:

Trustee Dennis Barsema: yes	Trustee Robert Boey: yes
Trustee Veronica Herrero: absent	Trustee Matthew Holmes: yes
Trustee Tim Struthers: yes	Trustee Eric Wasowicz: yes
Vice Chair Wheeler Coleman: absent	Board Chair John Butler: yes

The motion was approved.

The meeting is now closed and will re-open at the conclusion of the closed session in approximately two hours. The Board adjourned for closed session at 9:05 a.m.

The Board of Trustees of Northern Illinois University reconvened on June 28, 2017, at 11:28 a.m. Chair Butler announced they were reconvening after the closed session and asked for a roll call.

Present: Trustees Dennis Barsema, Robert Boey, Matthew Holmes, Tim Struthers, Eric Wasowicz, and Board Chair John Butler. Absent: Trustee Wheeler Coleman and Veronica Herrero.

## **7. CHAIR'S REPORT NO. 80**

### **Agenda Item 7.a. – Appointment of Acting President of Northern Illinois University**

Chair Butler began, with the Chair's Report No. 80, Item 7.a. The automatic succession of the provost to the acting presidency happens by operation of law and in this case Board policy. However, for the good of the university, the Board of Trustees and Dr. Lisa Freeman, mutually desire to enter into an employment agreement for an Acting President. The item's components were posted 48 hours in advance of this meeting as required by new provision in the NIU law that became effective January 1, 2017, that apply to new contracts the Board enters into with presidents, and I'm going to recite the nature of the agreement being considered by the Board of Trustees and other information about the agreement that is intended to inform the public of the business being conducted by the Board, and then I will seek a motion to approve the agreement. Subpoint A, Dr. Freeman will perform the duties and responsibilities of the Acting President until a new president is appointed after an appropriate search. Subpoint B, a base salary of approximately \$360,000 for the Acting President position. Subpoint C, deferred compensation in the form of \$25,000 for each year that is completed as Acting President and for one additional year after a return by Dr. Freeman to the Executive Vice President and Provost position. If there is no return to the Executive Vice President and Provost position, this additional one year of deferred compensation will be forfeited. Subpoint D, Dr. Freeman's base salary for the Executive Vice President and Provost position will be adjusted to \$300,000 annually when she returns to the position. Subpoint E, the Board provides authorization after a national search is completed for the next president to provide performance based incentive compensation to Dr. Freeman as the Executive Vice President and Provost in the range of \$20,000 to \$25,000 after a successful completion of goals and objectives mutually set by the new president and Dr. Freeman. Subpoint F, in the event that Dr. Freeman does not return to the Executive Vice President and Provost position upon completing service as the Acting President, she will be provided a 12-month professional leave to prepare to return to her academic appointment in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, Department of Biological Sciences.

Chair Butler continued, the compensation for the professional leave to be between the current base salary of \$280,000 and the adjusted base salary of \$300,000 depending upon the circumstances of the termination of her service as Acting President, example resignation versus without cause termination by the university or expiration of the term of service. Subpoint G, reimbursement for reasonable university related business and travel expenses for Dr. Freeman for performance of duties and responsibilities of Acting President in accordance with applicable state and university policy. Expenses for the spouse of the Acting President are reimbursable if they are related to business needs of the university. I am now seeking a motion that the Board hereby agrees to the terms and conditions I just outlined and authorizes those terms and conditions to be reduced to a mutually agreed written employment agreement for an Acting President between the Board and Dr. Freeman.

Trustee Boey so moved, Trustee Wasowicz seconded the motion. The motion was approved.

Lisa Freeman commented, I want to say thank you to everybody. Especially first I want to thank the Board of Trustees for their confidence in me and I want to express my appreciation to the many friends and well-wishers among our faculty and staff and students who have reached out to me to express their support. The feedback that I've gotten from across campus reminds me that, whatever differences we have among us, I know in my heart that we are unified in our love of NIU and our desire to do what's in the best interest of our university and our students. For example, we're united in our desire to provide students with the tools they need for success in their careers and their lives. Critical thinking skills, disciplinary knowledge, a strong work ethic, and the ability to work on teams as part of a global workforce. This is reflected in our shared commitment to sustaining academic excellence, to celebrating diversity, and making all members of the Huskie community feel welcome and valued. I assume the acting presidency with my eyes wide open

and an understanding of the hard work ahead. This is an inflection point for the university. Job one will be to rebuild trust in our leadership among our faculty and staff and across the larger university community. This isn't going to happen with words. It will only happen with actions and it will take time. What I will pledge to you and the campus community is that we will be guided by the principals of shared governance, mutual respect and transparency and decision making. I will also adhere to a very simple proposition, and one that I believe in deeply, that the strength of NIU is from the bottom up and not the top down. That means our best ideas come from staff and faculty and always have, and we in leadership need to listen very carefully and actively to them, to our faculty, to our staff, and to our students. My administration will cultivate and actively seek the best ideas and thinking from everyone on campus. The challenges we face in bolstering our financial stability, increasing our enrollment, and stabilizing and rebuilding our reputation are by no means all of our doing. We are facing unprecedented uncertainty at the state level. We are going to need to make some tough decisions this year. Decisions not everyone will like. What I can promise is that we will have total clarity in both how we make the decisions and how we intend to implement them. In our last meeting in this room the trustees spoke eloquently about being united in their approach to governing this great institution and I was very encouraged by their expressions of the sentiment. Unity doesn't mean that you always agree on a means to an end, rather unity means that, at the end of the day, there are core principles that we can all agree on and a shared understanding of our institutional mission. Such unity can be very powerful and it will help us to succeed despite the factors that are against us. What lifts my spirits about the future is that I've seen evidence of this unity throughout my tenure at NIU. Time and again I've seen staff, faculty, and students come together to tackle really large issues. Our work in program prioritization, which will proceed and hopefully accelerate, is a wonderful manifestation of what people can do when they work together on common goals. This kind of shared effort happens every day at NIU and weighs both large and small, and, now more than ever before, we need this unity of purpose to animate us on a daily basis. My pledge is to put all my time while Acting President into making this happen. This is one reason why I have made clear my intention to not compete for the permanent role of president. There will be no distractions from doing what I believe needs to be done to focus us on what brings us together rather than what divides us. I look forward to the challenge and I appreciate your support.

Chair Butler commented, this is the beginning of a new era. Thank you very much for those outstanding remarks. I'm so looking forward to your leadership.

### **Agenda Item 7.b. – Appointment of Acting Executive Vice President and Provost**

Chair Butler began, Agenda item 7.b. is the appointment of Acting Executive Vice President and Provost. Dr. Christopher McCord is being recommended for appointment as Acting Vice President and Provost effective July 1. I'm going to ask that Dr. Freeman summarize this item.

Dr. Freeman continued, in accordance with section 19.5 of NIUs bylaws there was consultation done with the leaders of our shared governance groups, the University Advisory Committee to the Board of Trustees, and the Dean's Council, regarding the characteristics of the person to be the interim Vice President and Provost, and in fact about Dean McCord's suitability for the position; and, I'm pleased to report there was unanimous support for Dean McCord ascend to this role. In making that recommendation, I thought long and hard about the necessity of sustaining operations and major initiatives, such as program prioritization and philanthropic efforts, and then also about how well suited and well prepared Dean McCord was to assume the responsibilities of Executive Vice President and Provost. He has significant academic leadership experience, a working knowledge of diverse academic disciplines, direct engagement in international initiatives, focus on teaching and learning, research and artistry, outreach and engagement, in depth knowledge of NIUs institutional culture, policies and procedures including shared governance, experience managing departmental and college level budgets and personnel actions, and an established reputation for fairness and transparency, a track record of using data to inform decisions, and the ability to communicate effectively with multiple internal and external stakeholder groups. On this basis, I recommend Dean McCord who has served as the Dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences since 2007 to the Board of Trustees



as the Acting Executive Vice President and Provost. The university recommendation is we request the Board of Trustees approve the appointment of Dean McCord as Acting Executive Vice President and Provost effective July 1, 2017.

Chair Butler added, trustees, the recommendation is for the Board to approve the appointment of Dr. Christopher McCord as Acting Executive Vice President and Provost effective July 1, 2017. Do I have a motion?

Trustee Wasowicz so moved and Trustee Boey seconded the motion. The motion was approved.

Chris McCord commented, my thoughts this morning in many ways echo those of Dr. Freeman. I'm grateful for the confidence in me that's been expressed and will do my best to reward that confidence with leadership that supports and sustains the university in these very challenging times. I'm well aware of the challenges. We have a deepening partisanship nationally that erodes many of the values of higher education. We have a crisis of confidence in Illinois public higher education fed by a state budget impasse now entering its third year. We have declining enrollments both state wide and locally. We have a campus crisis in leadership that's brought us to this moment with corresponding doubt, anxiety and damaged morale. I don't recite this list to be pessimistic, but I want to be clear that it's a moment when we'll be tested, and those of us called upon to lead will be tested the most. Meeting those challenges demands the best in us and I expect all of us to rise to the occasion. To do so, my commitment to NIU will be informed by the lessons of my own experiences together with the wisdom gathered from colleagues around the university and across the country. We've faced challenges before and won through them. Moreover, we're not alone. We stand together with our colleagues across the state, together with colleagues across the country who have faced their own crisis and prevailed. In Dr. Freeman, we have a brilliant, devoted, and principled leader who will do what is best for NIU. We have a community of faculty and staff who show again and again their dedication to the mission, to our students, and to each other. Holly Nicholson's inspiring words this morning is just the latest example of that. Building on those strengths, I commit to giving NIU my best. First, I commit to a focus on the mission, sustainable academic excellence that inspires and transforms our students, adds to the world's understanding through our research and artistry, actively connects the talents of our students, staff and faculty with our communities. Next, I commit to completing the work we have begun in transforming the university whether through formal efforts such as program prioritization or personal initiatives all across the university we have launched numerous efforts to adapt new ideas, new conditions and new opportunities. We must continue with the good work we've begun and bring to completion the transformative efforts we've undertaken to make ourselves a better place for our students, faculty and staff, alumni and community. We may be limited by resources. We must not be limited in imagination or will power. Very important to me is a commitment to fair and open dealing and to using the strengths that shared governance brings. We're a community of talented and dedicated individuals. We do not always agree and that diversity of thought is one of our strengths. Our shared governance allows us to bring together those diverse points of view to arrive at productive decisions and to empower individuals to make informed choices within shared understanding. Finally, I offer a commitment to lead. That means listening, collaborating, consoling; it means enabling colleagues and resolving differences; it means analyzing, guiding, inspiring. It means making clear decisions and then owning them. Again, my thanks for your support. I'll do my best to live up to it and to support Acting President Freeman to serve as an effective, inspiring leader in these very challenging times. Thank you.

### **Agenda Item 7.c. – Appointment of Interim Dean, College of Law**

Chair Butler continued, Agenda item 7.c. is the appointment of an Interim Dean for the College of Law. I'm going to ask that Dr. Freeman summarize this action item as well.

Dr. Freeman remarked, Professor Mark Cordes has served the College of Law for 34 years as a faculty member and multiple administrative roles. He served as an Associate Dean from 1996 to 1998, he was the outstanding law alumni's professor award for supportive alumni activities in 1999. In 2001 he was the

college's professor of the year, and he served previously as the interim dean in 2015 and 2016. Mark Cordes teaches course in property, land use controls, constitutional law; he's been active in our campus efforts to make people understand how freedom of expression works and how it can enable the free expression of all ideas in a community that still has values that it respects. He's been a member of the dean's leadership team. It's been a pleasure for me and for everyone on this campus to work with him and I'm delighted that he's willing to step up again when it's needed. The university recommendation is that the Board of Trustees approve the appointment of Professor Mark Cordes and the Interim Dean of the College of Law effective June 28, 2017.

Chair Butler added, the motion is that the Board of Trustees approve the appointment of Professor Mark Cordes as the Interim Dean of the College of Law effective June 28, 2017. Do I have a motion?

Trustee Boey so moved and Trustee Barsema seconded the motion. The motion was approved.

### **Agenda Item 7.d. – Yordon Center Lease Amendment**

Chair Butler continued, Agenda item 7.d. is the Yordon Center lease agreement. Mr. Pinkelton will explain what this item involves.

Larry Pinkelton began, we need to bring forth a request to have an agreement made between the Foundation and the institution to facilitate a transfer of payment. This is critical that we resolve this issue prior to the end of the fiscal year so that we stay clear of any conflict around making a payment to an entity without having a contractual relationship in place.

Chair Butler continued, the university requests the Board of Trustees approval to amend the Yordon Center lease to be extended at no additional cost in order to be coterminous with the Chessick Center ground lease and operational agreements. Do I have a motion?

Trustee Boey so moved and Trustee Wasowicz seconded the motion. Chair Butler called for a roll call vote:

Trustee Dennis Barsema: abstain	Trustee Robert Boey: yes
Trustee Veronica Herrero: absent	Trustee Matthew Holmes: yes
Trustee Tim Struthers: yes	Trustee Eric Wasowicz: yes
Vice Chair Wheeler Coleman: absent	Board Chair John Butler: yes

Motion Approved.

## **8. OTHER MATTERS**

No other matters were discussed.

## **9. NEXT MEETING**

Board of Trustees Meeting is scheduled for September 14, 2017. Board of Trustees Committee Meetings are scheduled for August 17, 2017.

## **10. ADJOURNMENT**

Chair Butler asked for a motion to adjourn. Trustee Boey so moved and Trustee Barsema seconded. The motion was approved. Meeting adjourned at 11:50 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathleen Carey  
Recording Secretary

*In compliance with Illinois Open Meetings Act 5 ILCS 120/1, et seq, a verbatim record of all Northern Illinois University Board of Trustees meetings is maintained by the Board Recording Secretary and is available for review upon request. The minutes contained herein represent a true and accurate summary of the Board proceedings.*