

Minutes of the
NIU Board of Trustees
Legislative Affairs, Research and Innovation
August 17, 2017

1. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

The meeting was called to order at 9:00 a.m. by Chair Barsema in the Board of Trustees Room, 315 Altgeld Hall. Recording Secretary Cathy Cradduck conducted a roll call. Members present were Trustees Boey, LaGioia, Struthers, Wasowicz and Barsema. Also present Acting President Lisa Freeman, Vice President for Research and Innovation Partnerships Gerald Blazey, Trustees Butler, Coleman, Board Parliamentarian Gregory Brady, UAC representative Cathy Doederlein.

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 Barsema asked for a motion to approve the meeting agenda. Trustee Wasowicz so moved and Trustee Struthers seconded. The motion was approved.

4. REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Chair Barsema asked for a motion to approve the minutes of May 18, 2017. Trustee Boey so moved and Trustee Struthers seconded. The motion passed.

5. CHAIR'S COMMENTS/ANNOUNCEMENTS

Chair Barsema introduced the UAC committee members and asked for comment. Cathy Doederlein thanked the trustees for engaging with UAC since the last meeting.

6. PUBLIC COMMENT

Chair Barsema asked if any member of the public had registered a written request to address the Board. Parliamentarian Brady confirmed one timely request had been received by Mr. Derek Van Burer. Chair Barsema thanked Mr. Van Burer for his comments.

7. UNIVERSITY REPORT

Agenda Item 7.c. Sponsored Programs Administration

Trustee Barsema introduced Dara Little, Assistant Vice President for Sponsored Programs Administration, to speak to the Board. Ms. Little indicated that we ended FY17 with 25.9 million in sponsored funding. Research funding is up 11% over FY16. The external research funding is critical for NIU to continue to stake its claim as a premier student-centered research university. These funds provide opportunities for both undergraduate and graduate students to work directly with principle investigators on their research programs. A lot of the undergraduate students are able to work in the labs and actually be involved in publishing the research and attending the conferences and so this research funding goes directly to supporting our students. It is building out those 21st century workforce skills, the next generation of STEM researchers, and it also gives them the analytical skills that they would carry with them throughout their lives regardless of their career.

If we look at that data by sponsor type, you can see that federal and state sponsors are our largest source of funding. This is normal and completely to be expected. The reduction in state funding that you see again is due to the elimination of that large state program. Our corporate funding was down a little bit this year. When we looked through the information it looks like there were a number of larger contracts about \$100,000 a piece that were not renewed. I'm not sure why but that did seem to contribute to that decline. I also wanted to point out that you can see that our funding this year from public and non-profit sponsors was up about a half million dollars. And this is due to a large grant that our library received for the digitization of nickel and dime novels, and so while a lot of this report really focuses on research I think it's also important to recognize the depth and the scope and the caliber of our programs across campus. And so this slide here breaks out our funding by type and agency and of course this models our portfolio with the state funding the majority of our public service type projects and with the federal government supporting the vast majority of our research activities. The take away here is really that to continue to sustain or grow research we need to continue to be competitive for federal funding. Federal funding is critical for our research programs. Our total research funding for FY17 was \$9.7 million. Out of that \$9.7 million, five agencies provide 70% of that funding and really highlights the importance of federal funding, but also the fact that our funding rests within five federal agencies.

Last year our chemistry department received a Research Experiences for Undergraduates award for about \$275,000. The program enables students from underserved populations or who are at institutions that may not have a robust research infrastructure to come and spend the summer at NIU working alongside our principle investigators. Chair Barsema asked if we do workshops or classes on how to write proposals and grant responses. AVP Little replied that we do as part of the funding development series mentioned earlier. The series is a combination of Sponsored Programs conducting some of those workshops and some external consultants.

Agenda Item 7.d. SWOT Analysis

Trustee Barsema introduced Dr. Jerry Blazey, Vice President for Research and Innovation Partnerships.

Dr. Blazey indicated that the very first step in a strategic plan is a SWOT analysis. As context, he continued, I'd just like to remind the board of the three aspects of our university mission which refer to excellence and engagement and that's number one, teaching and learning; two, research and scholarship; and three, outreach and engagement. These three areas do not exist in isolation, but reinforce and strengthen one another and it reflects the president's comment about how we try to optimize our resources to move forward in all three areas. The intersection of instruction, scholarship and outreach are what distinguishes NIU and makes us attractive to students and faculty. As you probably recently heard, we were cited as a national leader among selective universities for simultaneously promoting research and social mobility. That speaks to our mission to reach out to our students and provide them opportunities and in my opinion this distinction will become more important as public support wains for higher education and competition for students and faculty increases. I firmly believe for the university to remain vital we need a strong research component and it is key to our mission as well. Given the centrality to our mission and our future success, a SWOT analysis of research and innovation is well placed and I thank Chairman Barsema for encouraging us to do so.

AVP Little and I took the initial pass at this and then shared it with the other division leaders. This is an analysis of research and innovation program strength, weakness, and opportunity threats to provide our framework for evaluating the potential for future programs. So strength, positive attributes, tangible and intangible that are internal to NIU and within institutional controls. The important caveat there is internal or not caveat, criteria is internal. Weaknesses, circumstances that detract from the institution value proposition or place the institution at a disadvantage. Opportunity, external factors which when leveraged will enhance our programs. Threats, external factors beyond institutional control that place our programs at risk. So the important criteria in there are external factors. So this is a definition. You could put various items in various categories depending on your definitions, but we needed to start somewhere. So the

strengths, I like this image because it speaks to that observation or my observation that broadly speaking our primary institutional strengths are associated with faculty and their scholarship, our students, student engagement and outreach programs, and recent administrative efforts to strengthen and invest in our programs.

With respect to faculty and scholarship, I think our number one asset is our enthusiastic faculty. They're nationally and internationally recognized and as you saw in one of the plots Dara showed, they are still investing heavily and significantly in their scholarship just by the number of proposals they're submitting. I can't stress enough how much work it is to write a proposal and how many you need to submit to actually successfully get external funding. It's a painful process at times and you really need to make it something you're going to succeed at and our faculty are successful. They've created numerous strong programs of public interest that I do think strengthens our position with the community, and I'll name just a few, they're not all of them, but they're ones that have been very successful and have high potential going forward. In Southeast Asian Studies we have a national reputation. In the Center for the Study of Family Violence and Sexual Assault we have a national and international reputation. Non-profit NGO studies, social entrepreneurship, environmental studies are growing rapidly and there's going to be a greater societal need as the years pass. Physics partnerships with the labs and recently advanced manufacturing is really heating up. The third pillar or tree supporting our serving as a strength is our student engagement and just the numbers point out why they're a strength. We have 4700 graduate students. Graduate students are the lifeblood of a research program.

In terms of cultural aspects that are weaknesses, we have uneven research support across the campuses and colleges. Some areas have great mentorship. One of the reasons CLAS has so much of the research portfolio is they've got it up and running. Some of the other colleges have fallen off recently or are ramping up research. We really need to help with mentorship and unit support to help them get it up to the level of CLAS. Another cultural weakness is what I would term our nascent campus-wide innovation and corporate engagement strategy with respect to research. A cultural impediment I referenced as a strength is also a weakness is policy impediments. We still have some in place and we need to work on those. In terms of key missing programs, what I mean by that is we have a limited complementary doctorate programs.

Opportunities, we have two general types, continued Dr. Blazey; those that are evolving and those that are related to location. It's amazing how many of our opportunities have to do with our location. In terms of evolving, I perceive a new commitment between the university and city leadership and we should be able to find ways to leverage that and research programs that make sense for both institutions or both entities. There are changing student demographics that we need to respond to as the interests of society change, what becomes important and what becomes less important. And there's a growing need for environmental stewardship and advanced manufacturing and those two megatrends that offer opportunities, we're well positioned to respond to them. In terms of location, we're sort of situated kind of nicely up here in northern Illinois. The other research universities, and they're goliaths, and roughly two hours away, so in this area, we are the research university. In terms of innovation and entrepreneurship, our proximity to Chicago offers a lot of opportunities. Our location offers a huge alumni base, and we have highly regarded collaborations with the national laboratories and we can grow key programs that are pursued with high levels of support by the federal government.

Trustee Barsema thanked Dr. Blazey for his remarks.

8. OTHER MATTERS

No other matters were discussed.

9. NEXT MEETING DATE

The next meeting of the LARI Committee will be Thursday, November 16, 2017 at 9:00 a.m.

10. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Barsema asked for a motion to adjourn. Trustee Wasowicz motioned and Trustee Boey seconded. The motion was approved. Meeting adjourned at 10:00 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Recording Secretary

Cathy Craddock

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.