

Minutes of the
Board of Trustees of Northern Illinois University
Research and Innovation, Legal and Legislative Affairs
Committee Meeting
November 9, 2023

CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

The meeting was called to order at 11:21 a.m. by Committee Chair Veronica Herrero in the Board of Trustees Room, 315 Altgeld Hall. Recording Secretary Rachel Jurs-Lauderdale conducted a roll call of the Trustees.

Committee Vice Chair Rita Athas: Present Trustee Dennis Barsema: Present
Trustee John Butler: Present Trustee Montel Gayles: Present
Trustee Tim Moore: Present Trustee Leland Strom: Present
Board Chair Eric Wasowicz: Present Committee Chair Veronica Herrero: Present

Also present were President Lisa Freeman; Committee Liaison and Vice President for Research and Innovation Partnerships Yvonne Harris; Vice President and General Counsel and Board Parliamentarian Bryan Perry; Chief Strategy Officer and Liaison to the Board of Trustees Matt Streb; Executive Director and Assistant Vice President for Research and Sponsored Programs, Dara Little, and Director for Federal Relations, Julia Rowe. University Advisory Council (UAC) Representative Felicia Bohanon and Benjamin Creed. Present virtually was Director of State Relations, Katie Davison.

VERIFICATION OF QUORUM AND APPROPRIATE NOTICE OF PUBLIC MEETING

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

MEETING AGENDA APPROVAL

Committee Chair Herrero asked for a motion to approve the meeting agenda. Trustee Gayles so moved, and Trustee Barsema seconded. The motion was approved.

REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF AUGUST 24, 2023

Committee Chair Herrero asked for a motion to approve the minutes of August 24, 2023. Chair Wasowicz so moved, Trustee Gayles seconded, Trustee Strom abstained. The motion was approved.

CHAIR'S COMMENTS/ANNOUNCEMENTS

Committee Chair Herrero welcomed any University Advisory Committee Members. She also welcomed Director of Federal Relations, Julia Rowe. Committee Chair Herrero recognized the

continued successes of our Sponsored Programs Administration and thanked all of the faculty and staff who helped with those efforts.

Committee Chair Herrero congratulated Associate Vice President for Research/ Executive Director Sponsored Programs, Dara Little for receiving the Hartford Nicholson Award presented by the Society of Research Administrators International. She noted this achievement is reserved for members who have made major, distinguishable contributions that benefit the entire society and who demonstrate exceptional leadership.

Committee Chair Herrero shared that NIU is collaborating with connected Nation Internet Exchange Points LLC and noted this is an exciting opportunity for NIU to work with surrounding communities to close the digital divide. Details of this partnership were shared during the FACFO meeting.

Committee Chair Herrero shared that we would hear from NIU senior leadership about the “Big Picture Meeting” with the Illinois Board of Higher Education. The theme for the meeting this year was “A Thriving Illinois: Higher Education Paths to Equity Sustainability and Growth” and strategies included how NIU can leverage the Illinois Innovation Network to support this focus.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Committee Chair Herrero introduced the public comment portion of the meeting. General Counsel Bryan Perry confirmed that no public comments were received.

UNIVERSITY REPORTS

Committee Chair Herrero asked Vice President for Research and Innovation Partnerships Dr. Yvonne Harris, to provide an update from the Division of Research and Innovation Partnerships.

VPRIPS Harris reported that she would like to highlight the research funding this quarter which surged 121%. She recognized Associate Vice President for Research/Executive Director of Sponsored Programs, Dara Little for her hard work and dedication to the division and NIU. Dr. Harris noted that Dara was named president-elect for the Society of Research Administrators International and she currently is a member of the Board of Directors. Dr. Harris shared that this is an opportunity for NIU and other R2 institutions to have a voice on an national and international scale.

VPRIPS Harris announced that Associate Professor and Director of the Institute for the Study of Environment, Sustainability and Energy, Thomas Skuzinski was named Chair of the Illinois Innovation Network Research and Collaboration Working Committee. She acknowledged the work of former Vice President Gerald Blazey to forge this important relationship with IIN and other state and national organizations that allow NIU to continue important work.

VPRIPS Harris congratulated NIU Chemistry Professor, Dr. Tao Li who was named as a new member of the U.S. Department of Energy Argonne National Laboratory. She also reported that Dr. Li received the Designing Materials to Revolutionize and Engineer our Future (DMREF) Award. The award is for work on a project that will be used to train the next generation of undergraduates to develop innovative and low-cost processes to replace blast furnaces in

steelmaking while reducing greenhouse emissions. The project will be used to train, educate, and develop a workforce that is diverse, equitable, and inclusive. NIU will be the first R2 university to take the lead on this prestigious National Science Foundation (NSF) award.

Agenda Item 7.a. – State Legislative Report

Ms. Katie Davison, Director of State Relations reported virtually to share remarks. Katie shared that the General Assembly would adjourn with no legislation of significant impact on higher education as nothing substantive was presented for the 2023 veto session. Work is ongoing to identify developing legislation in support of the 2024 spring legislative agenda. Top of mind for all institutions is adequate and equitable funding along with addressing deferred maintenance challenges facing campus.

Agenda Item 7.b. – Federal Relations Report

Ms. Julia Rowe, Director for Federal Relations reported that Representative Mike Johnson was elected Speaker of the House of Representatives after Representative Kevin McCarthy was removed. Government operates under a continuing resolution with FY23 levels until November 17th. On October 11, 2023 Representative Virginia Fox introduced the Defending Education Transparency and Ending Rogue Regimes Engaging in Nefarious Transactions (DETERRENT) Act, modifying Section 117 of the Higher Education Act which requires foreign gift reporting for institutions of higher education. The act would lower the reporting threshold from \$250,000 to \$50,000 and require disclosures of gifts to individual staff and faculty at research heavy institutions, including penalties for noncompliant universities. The penalties would result in loss of Title IX funding,. The bill has not moved forward. The new FAFSA mandated by the FAFSA Simplification Act is delayed until December. The Department of Education has not transmitted its final Title IX rule to the Office of Management and Budget for review. A Judge in the Southern District of Texas ruled that DACA was unlawful with the ruling resting on an earlier decision from the U.S. Court of Appeals in the Fifth Circuit in October, 2022. DACA recipients status remains unchanged at this time allowing for renewal.

Agenda Item 7.c. Sponsored Programs Administration Quarterly Report

Ms. Dara Little, Associate Vice President for Research/Executive Director Sponsored Programs reported that totals reached \$61M for funding including COVID Relief Funds, or \$58M without. Looking at trends we see increased funding coming from The College of Liberal Arts and Sciences along with the Office of Outreach, Engagement, and Regional Development. Also noted were the increased number of proposals and state funding since FY22. Sponsored proposal and award volume continues to increase, with a 72% increase in award funding since FY19. Federal funds account for most sponsored funding, but direct State funding is increasing and SPA continues to look for ways to modernize to keep pace with the increased volume and complexity.

Agenda Item 7.d. Alignment With the IBHE's Thriving Illinois Growth Goals Presentation

NIU senior leaders presented information about the IBHE Strategic Plan adopted in 2021. To summarize, NIU is leveraging partnerships with the IIN, the IBHE and community colleges to build higher education and prepare students for success in the workplace.

OTHER MATTERS

Committee Chair Herrero asked if there were other matters to come before the Committee. Vice President and General Counsel, and Board Parliamentarian Bryan Perry stated there were none.

NEXT MEETING DATE

Committee Chair Herrero noted that the next meeting will be held on February 15, 2024.

ADJOURNMENT

Committee Chair Herrero asked for a motion to adjourn. Trustee Gayles so moved, and Trustee Moore seconded. The motion was approved.

Committee Chair Herrero asked Ms. Jurs-Lauderdale to conduct a roll call vote.

Committee Vice Chair Rita Athas: Present	Trustee Dennis Barsema: Present
Trustee John Butler: Present	Trustee Montel Gayles: Present
Trustee Tim Moore: Present	Trustee Leland Strom: Present
Board Chair Eric Wasowicz: Present	Committee Chair Veronica Herrero: Present

The motion was approved.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:30 p.m.

Rachel Jurs-Lauderdale

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.