

Minutes of the
Board of Trustees of Northern Illinois University
Research and Innovation, Legal and Legislative Affairs
Committee Meeting
February 16, 2023

CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

The meeting was called to order at 9:42 a.m. by Committee Vice Chair Rita Athas. This committee meeting was being conducted in person and through videoconferencing communications pursuant to Public Act 101-0640, enacted June 12, 2020, and section 7(e) of the Illinois Open Meetings Act, allowing for virtual board meetings during a disaster declaration relating to public health concerns. The Chair of the Board determined that an in-person meeting was not practical or prudent because of the disaster. As such, trustees attended this meeting by audio and visual conferencing and not by physical presence.

Recording Secretary Crystal Doyle 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: Absent	Trustee Bob Pritchard: Absent
Board Chair Eric Wasowicz: Present	Committee Chair Veronica Herrero: Absent

Also present were President Lisa Freeman; Committee Liaison and Vice President for Research and Innovation Partnerships Gerald Blazey; Vice President and General Counsel and Board Parliamentarian Bryan Perry; Chief of Staff and Liaison to the Board of Trustees Matt Streb; and 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 Vice Chair Athas asked for a motion to approve the meeting agenda. Trustee Gayles so moved, and Board Chair Wasowicz seconded.

Committee Vice Chair Athas asked Ms. Doyle 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: Absent	Trustee Bob Pritchard: Absent
Board Chair Eric Wasowicz: Present	Committee Chair Veronica Herrero: Absent

The motion was approved.

REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF NOVEMBER 10, 2022

Committee Vice Chair Athas asked for a motion to approve the minutes of November 10, 2022. Board Chair Wasowicz so moved, and Trustee Butler seconded.

Trustee Gayles noted that he was at the November 10, 2022 meeting and would like that noted in the minutes.

Trustee Butler also suggested that it should be noted at the top of the minutes if someone has joined the meeting after roll call has been taken. That way it can easily be seen who attended the meeting.

Committee Vice Chair Athas asked for a motion to approve the minutes as amended with those two comments. Trustee Butler so moved, and Trustee Gayles seconded.

Committee Vice Chair Athas asked Ms. Doyle 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: Absent Trustee Bob Pritchard: Absent

Board Chair Eric Wasowicz: Present Committee Chair Veronica Herrero: Absent

The motion was approved.

CHAIR'S COMMENTS/ANNOUNCEMENTS

Committee Vice Chair Athas reported that Dr. Anna Quider has departed NIU to establish her own consulting firm which by all accounts is doing well, and we wish her well. Committee Vice Chair Athas expressed excitement for the faculty presentation as it reflects deep commitment to the mission of NIU. Project Flex engages incarcerated young men and women in positive sports programs that teach life skills and healthy fitness behaviors for life after prison. As Dr. Blazey will discuss, we see from the 2021 NSF Higher Education Research and Development survey that NIU has maintained a high statewide profile in many of the STEM fields, this supports our mission by offering opportunity for all students. The success continues with second-quarter sponsored funding totaling \$28M, running 28% ahead of last year. Prospects look bright, and I'm pleased to see that the newly established Office of Research Development starts operations this year.

PUBLIC COMMENT

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

UNIVERSITY REPORTS

Committee Vice Chair Athas asked Vice President for Research and Innovation Partnerships Dr. Gerald C. Blazey, to provide an update from the Division of Research and Innovation Partnerships.

Dr. Blazey reported that Dr. Anna Quider's last day was January 3rd so he would be providing the Federal Report. The search committee for the new Director of Federal Relations has completed phone interviews and three candidates will be invited to NIU for in-person interviews. Organizationally the Director of Federal Relations will be in the President's Office and reporting to Dr. Streb. Last month had two visits from the Illinois delegation. Congresswoman Lauren Underwood visited CEET Friday January 20, to celebrate Congressionally directed funding of

\$1.5M to the College of Engineering and Engineering Technology for modernization of its Microelectronic Research and Development Lab. Senator Durbin also sponsored the funding. The very next day, Saturday January 21st, Senator Duckworth visited NIU. We discussed a wide range of topics: international students and visas, the HTC building and NICCS, the feasibility study for extension of train service to DeKalb, support for the CSEAS, the Senator's upcoming trip to Southeast Asia, financial aid, student mental health, veterans' affairs, and research equity. Current Federal efforts are focused on the next round of Congressionally directed funding. We are already in conversation with staff from Representative Underwood's office and the office of the Senators Durbin and Duckworth.

Vice President Blazey provided an update on NICCS saying there has been a delay on CDB due to a project manager transition. However, it seems to be resolved and we heard just this week that contract negotiations with the selected design consultant are commencing. Internally, we are moving forward with a search for the Director of NICCS, the position is now posted, and the search committee will be led by Dr. Streb.

Vice President Blazey continued his updates and reported that the National Science Foundation Higher Education R&D Survey for 2021 was recently released. The annual survey collects information on research expenditures at US universities and is a widely regarded measure of research productivity. With \$25M in expenditures NIU was ranked 254th nationally out of 909 institutions receiving federal funding, that's close to the top quartile at 28%. Our state profile is strong, out of the state institutions, we rank fourth behind UIUC, UIC, and SIU. NIU is especially strong in the STEM fields, ranking third in physics, psychology, geosciences, chemistry, computer sciences, and engineering.

Much of our S&E expenditure derives from sponsored funding which Dr. Blazey is happy to report continues to grow. Through the second quarter of FY23, NIU has received a total of 190 sponsored awards totaling \$27.8M, up 28% relative to last year. The sum includes \$9.5M in research, \$4.2M in instruction, and \$14M in other sponsored activities. Vice President Blazey mention that \$15M in contracts are awaiting execution which would bring the total up to \$43M matching last year's total non-Covid funding with 20 weeks to go. Credit to faculty for their passion and dedication as you will see in Dr. Jones presentation later this morning. Vice President Blazey thanked SPA for capably handling the increased volume and complexity.

Vice President Blazey discussed several initiatives that will support further growth in the sponsored funding portfolio. He announced that Federico Bassetti has joined the Office of Innovation as the Assistant Director for Innovation Ecosystem Development. The CHIPS+Science Act had provisions for emerging research institutions like NIU and the agencies have already released solicitations for such institutions. The DOE has a program called FAIR which stands for Funding for Accelerated Inclusive Research. FAIR seeks applications from institutions historically underrepresented in the DOR portfolio, including minority serving institutions and emerging research institutions, to perform basic research in fields supported by the DOE. The NIU faculty have responded by submitting six letters of intent. There are also similar programs for NSF and the DOD. To encourage further development of the research portfolio, Dr. Blazey announces the new Office of Research Development or ORD has started ramping up operations. Establishing ORD is responsive to University Goal 3 *academic excellence and curricular innovation* which states: an enterprise office will expand NIU resources available to facilitate and support transdisciplinary research, scholarship, artistry, and engagement, and facilitate cross-university

and multi-institutional awards and proposals. Kellie Dyslin has been appointed Director of the Office and is working hard to establish the program.

Agenda Item 7.a. Sponsored Program Administration Quarterly Report

The Committee reviewed the sponsored program administration quarterly written report submitted by Assistant Vice President Dara Little. No questions were raised.

Agenda Item 7.b. – State Legislative Report

Dr. Matt Streb provided the State Legislative Report on Katie Davison’s behalf. The Governor gave his budget address yesterday and we are very grateful for his commitment to higher education. The Governor proposed a 7% increase to our State Appropriations. If passed, the increase is the highest in two decades. Right now, we receive about \$92.2M from the state and if the Governor’s budget proposal passes, we would be receiving about \$98.5M. There was an increase in MAP funding. Right now, the average student receives \$5K in MAP funding but that will increase to about \$8.5K. That is due to an overall increase in MAP funding by about \$100M. AIM High was put forward as being maintained which is very helpful to the Huskie Pledge here at NIU. Dr. Streb recited the Governor’s close to his speech yesterday. He talked about Joyce DeFauw and all she went through to receive her degree at NIU. State Appropriations are starting, and our hearing will be scheduled soon. Ms. Davison is tracking many bills right now that have an impact on higher education. March 21 is NIU Advocacy Day in Springfield, and many students, alumni, faculty, and administrators will be traveling down to Springfield to support NIU.

Agenda Item 7.c. – Faculty Presentation

Zachary Wahl-Alexander, Associate Professor in the College of Education’s Department of Kinesiology and Physical Education (KNPE), and Gabrielle Bennett, Doctoral Student in KNPE, gave a presentation on Project Flex. Jennifer Jacobs, Associate Professor, KNPE, is co-lead on Project Flex. The trustees thanked the presenters for a wonderful presentation.

OTHER MATTERS

Committee Vice Chair Athas asked if there were other matters to come before the Committee. The Committee confirmed that there were no other matters to be discussed.

NEXT MEETING DATE

Committee Chair Herrero noted that the next meeting will be held on May 11, 2023.

ADJOURNMENT

Committee Vice Chair Athas asked for a motion to adjourn. Board Chair Wasowicz so moved, and Trustee Gayles seconded. The motion was approved.

Committee Vice Chair Athas asked Ms. Doyle 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: Absent Trustee Bob Pritchard: Absent

Board Chair Eric Wasowicz: Present Committee Chair Veronica Herrero: Absent

The motion was approved.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:44 a.m.

Crystal Doyle

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.