**Draft Year End Report of the Ad Hoc Resources, Space and Budget Committee**

The Ad Hoc Resources, Space and Budget (ad hoc RSB) Committee was established for AY 2024-25 based on the recommendations of a working group consisting of representatives from the Provost’s Office, Administration and Finance, University Council, Faculty Senate, Staff Councils, and college level administration. The ad hoc RSB Committee was charged with drafting the language to formalize a permanent RSB Committee beginning in AY 2025-26 and engage in the proposed duties.

This report includes an overview of the activities of the ad hoc RSB Committee and includes recommendations for NIU and the permanent RSB Committee.

**Overview of activities**

The ad hoc RSB Committee completed the primary duties through five meetings of the full group with a planning meeting ahead of each consisting of EVPP Elish-Piper, CFO Middlemist, CHRO Acardo, and FS President Creed. The ad hoc RSB Committee was also invited and participated in shared governance and shared leadership meetings related to the development of the FY 26 university budget. Ahead of this meeting, the faculty, staff, and student members of the ad hoc RSB Committee caucused to discuss the shared documents. RSB members should consider incorporating this type of meeting routinely and ahead of important discussions as this allows for a different type of conversation to occur. Below are the main topics addressed and accomplishments of the ad hoc RSB Committee.

**Establishing permanent Resources, Space and Budget Committee**

* Finalized and forwarded language to the University Council which establishes the permanent RSB Committee. The University Council voted to approve the language as written and the Resources, Space and Budget Committee was formally established as a committee of the University Council.

**Deficit mitigation strategies**

* Given the requirement from the Board of Trustees and the HLC for a balanced FY 26 budget, deficit mitigation strategies were discussed in some capacity in all meetings of the ad hoc RSB Committee. This included discussion of: a) the context and rationale for our current structural deficit; b) overviews of past and active deficit mitigation strategies during AY 2024-25; and c) planned for and, in some cases, then implemented strategies including strategic personnel processes, campuswide guidelines and fiscal discipline measures, and rebuilding budgets from the ground up (which manifested in the modified zero-based budgeting process). The ad hoc RSB Committee learned about these topics and asked questions of each. The conversations in these meetings were advisory in nature as university administration decided if and how to implement various activities related to deficit mitigation.

**FY26 Budget Development**

* The group discussed and made recommendations around various aspects of the process, timeline, and priorities. Additionally, the group participated in two shared governance and shared leadership meetings where key decision points were presented by President Freeman, EVPP Elish-Piper, and CFO Middlemist and discussed by attendees.

**Pricing recommendations**

* Draft pricing recommendations related to tuition changes were shared with the ad hoc RSB Committee prior to their finalization with feedback sought. In future years, the general principles, assumptions and approaches will come forward earlier in the process.

**Budget website review**

* The group reviewed an early version of the newly launched budget website and feedback was shared directly with the team tasked with updating the information. Some recommendations and suggestions have been addressed already while others are in the pipeline for development and implementation.

**Space improvements, investments, and usage**

* The ad hoc RSB Committee learned about the current work of the Learning Spaces Shared Leadership team, offered feedback and recommendations related to methodology and definitions, and learned about the guiding principles in the decision-making processes.
* An overview of the Capital Project and Space Committee was presented along with opportunities to provide recommendations and engage in conversation. Context, strategy, and campus sustainability were discussed.

**Topic calendar for RSB in AY 2025-26**

* The ad hoc RSB Committee members discussed and identified some key priority topics to come before the permanent RSB Committee in the upcoming academic year. These will be discussed with incoming members and senior administrators to develop a calendar which routinely addresses important topics while also leaving room for emergent topics.

**Recommendations**

NIU needs to continue becoming more financially stable, healthier as an institution, and ready for future opportunities and headwinds. This past academic year has meaningful progress toward these goals, including initial steps toward a more transparent and inclusive budgeting process. The reestablishment of the RSB Committee is another important step as it (re)creates a forum for more intentional, transparent, and meaningful conversations in alignment with shared governance principles and commitments. It is the recommendation of the ad hoc RSB Committee members that campus, broadly, engage in the hard conversations necessary to move our institution forward so we can fulfill our mission and vision while living out our values. RSB is poised to be a key shared governance group which can be utilized as a thoughtful partner, to improve decision-making, and to build trust within and across the university. To do so will require intentional efforts by the members of the RSB Committee, collaboration from senior administration, and communication to and from campus. The initial progress is encouraging.

Going forward, it is recommended that RSB adopt a calendar that accommodates the routinized and predictable decisions related to the duties of RSB, ask for and receive data which can inform decision making and recommendations, and engage in the sometimes hard conversations in a manner that is respectful, constructive, and critical. RSB must be a reliable partner in both the current moment where budgets must be cut, and in future moments to ensure NIU is a good steward of resources when considering making investments in programs, opportunities, and supports.