



**ATHLETIC BOARD MEETING**  
**February 14, 2018 – 1:00 pm**

**Present:** Mark Groza (Chair), Brian McCormick, Sarah Johnston-Rodriguez, Joe Bittorf, Josephine Umoren, Thomas Bough, Pete Garrity, Jeffrey Salmon, Sean Frazier, Devin Halicki, Aubrie Purtell

**Guests:** Ryan Sedevie, Sr. Assoc. AD/Collegiate Advancement & External Affairs; TJ Feuerbach, Sr. Assoc. AD/Development & Revenue Generation; Melissa Dawson, Sr. Assoc. AD/Director of SAASS; Lisa Stocksdale, Sr. Assist. AD/Human Resources & Donor Relations; John Cheney, Sr. Assoc. AD/Internal Operations; Debra Boughton, Sr. Assoc. AD/Finance & Operations/SWA

- I. **Call to Order** – M. Groza called the meeting to order at 1:02 pm.
- II. **Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes** – M. Groza noted that he was not present during the NCAA Basketball investigations interview process as was noted in section IV, part b of the previous meeting's minutes. P. Garrity moved to approve; B. McCormick seconded; motion carried unanimously.
- III. **NCAA / NIU Transfer Policy & AB's role in process** – M. Groza discussed the Athletic Board's role in the current process for Student-Athlete transfer requests. Student-Athletes must first ask their coaching staff for approval to transfer. If the coaching staff denies this request, there is an appeals process, which the Athletic Board is a part of. These requests are usually seen later in the semester, and while there are general rules, each case is looked at individually. Some factors include whether the transfer request is to an in-conference school or a future opponent. M. Groza noted that the assistance of the Athletic Board members is greatly appreciated during this process.
- IV. **Athletics Director Update** – S. Frazier provided a brief recap on the current progress of the winter sports programs (handout provided). The Women's Basketball team has been plagued with injuries, but is ranked 7<sup>th</sup> in overall Rating Percentage (RPI) and is seeking a bid to the NCAA Tournament. The Men's Basketball team is ranked around 11<sup>th</sup> or 12<sup>th</sup> in the RPI. The numbers for both programs show the high level of competition this season, and NIU is still very much in the conversation. S. Frazier noted that Cram the Convo is this weekend, and that Athletics is looking to get record crowds, asking the Athletic Board to spread the word. Wrestling, Track & Field and Gymnastics are all wrapping up their final home matches, and with that will come the transition to Spring sports. Softball is already five games in, with their first home game 29 games in! Baseball will start tomorrow.

S. Frazier then discussed the current Convocation Center Naming Rights Request for Proposal (RFP), stating that Athletics is hoping to have bids in by the end of the month. This is the first time Athletics has had a RFP, and, with all the budgetary issues across campus, they felt that this was a great opportunity. S. Frazier noted that the process has been and will continue to be very transparent, stating that the information has been posted and is available on the Athletics' website, social media, etc. To date, there have been a number of parties that have expressed interest. In addition to the Convo Naming Rights RFP, Athletics also has an Apparel RFP. The NIU brand has become more defined under their relationship with the current provider, Adidas, however from a business perspective Athletics needs to subsidize financially and look to see where they can get more out of Adidas or another partner. R. Sedevie and D. Boughton are the liaisons for this particular proposal.

Lastly, S. Frazier touched base on the FY19 budget process, remarking that another round of budget cuts are to come. In transparency with the board, donors, campus, and community, he indicated that the University is looking to have the budget reduced by another 6.5-8%, equating over a million dollars in cuts for Athletics. Additional information will be provided to the Board as it becomes available.

P. Garrity asked about Athletics' broadcast out of the Chicago market. R. Sedevie stated that we have an agreement with WIND 560AM for every game, which has a good bandwidth and reaches Chicago as well as areas in Wisconsin and Indiana. While WIND is second tier to the SCORE, which was taken by the University of Illinois, R. Sedevie believes that this works out better for NIU since the SCORE just picked up the Cubs. Anything Cubs related gets priority and bumps other programs.

M. Groza asked how the search for a new Women's Soccer Head Coach was going. S. Frazier noted that they have narrowed the search to three candidates, with the last interview coming up next week.

On a final note, J. Cheney congratulated Aubrey Purtell on her selection in the Physical Therapy program here at NIU.

V. **College athletics landscape – questions from the board?** J. Salmon asked if any other conference schools/states are under the same financial pressure as NIU. S. Frazier answered that yes, other schools are seeing the same strain, however NIU is unique in that we've already made cuts in the past several fiscal years. NIU has also seen a decline in enrollment, so as the student enrollment decreases and budget cuts increase, we are seeing "double-cuts". This is a driving force for Athletics' need to become sustainable.

D. Bough asked if there have been any updates on the basketball scandals/investigations. S. Frazier could not comment as to the status, but suggested that perhaps some schools may not have gone through the investigations process properly, causing a delay in processing. He noted that NIU has had their internal investigation, and M. Groza noted that the MAC seems happy with the process for schools on the MAC level.

P. Garrity asked if we were seeing increasing disparity between the "big guys" (i.e. Power 5) and the "little guys" (i.e. the MAC). S. Frazier indicated that the media plays a large part in this, and noted that the culture of today is seeing a lot more "cord cutting" in which people are foregoing cable. When those contracts come up for renewal, the larger institutions may face hardships, which could level the playing ground.

S. Frazier closed with a note on the current issues at Michigan State, remarking that the Athletics' Senior Staff is constantly reviewing and testing their processes to ensure a safe and inclusive environment for all of the students and staff. In regards to Title IX rules and regulations, S. Frazier noted that NIU is already doing a lot of things right, however there is always room for improvement.

VI. **Liaison Reports:**

a. ***Diversity Integration Group (D.I.G.) – L. Stocksdale***

A survey was sent out to the department several weeks ago. D.I.G. will look at the results, which will be used to assist employees and to strengthen the D.I.G. action plan moving forward.

L. Stocksdale also talked about NIU Athletics' MAC Diversity and Inclusion Internship. Mariyah Henley and Tre Whitaker were the first participants in the internship last fall.

S. Frazier recently presented at the MAC Diversity and Inclusion Summit with Jerome Rodgers and Monique Bernoudy. The MAC is a trailblazer in this area, as the summit was the first ever of its kind. In addition to the creation of the D&I Summit, three of the past six awards granted by the NCAA for Diversity and Inclusion have been awarded to MAC institutions (NIU, BGSU, and Buffalo), showing a truly positive representation of the MAC and its schools.

b. **Finance and Facilities** – J. Salmon/ D. Boughton/ J. Cheney

They discussed both RFPs, a few changes in policy, but overall there was not a lot of information to share. A few of the proposed improvements to the facilities include a new scoreboard and central video board, as well as remodeling of the Nelson Club. The replacement of the central video board will come out of reserve funds from auxiliary units, and should prove beneficial from a revenue generation standpoint.

c. **Student Staff Services** – J. Umoren/ M. Dawson/ L. Stocksdaile

The Student Staff Services working group met and discussed Title IX.

J. Umoren also discussed a presentation her students did on the nutrition of female athletics teams and discovered that numerous Student-Athletes did not know enough about their nutritional needs, and many were interested in having someone on staff who can provide that information to them. It was suggested that a dietician or graduate assistant be brought in to help student-athletes. D. Boughton noted that Athletics has partnered with Hy-Vee, and believes they can lean more on their campus partners to close the gap on this issue.

d. **External Affairs** – G. Roby/ R. Sedevie/ T. Feuerbach

The group met last Thursday and discussed the Convocation Center and Apparel RFPs. They also looked at the Football schedule, which Athletics hopes to release by 3/01, and talked about the upcoming “Stories from the Sidelines” which will host past NIU Football players like Golladay, Diem, and Lewis talking about their experiences and more.

The football season ticket and online renewal deadline is April 28<sup>th</sup>. HAF hopes to get information on this out mid-late next week. It will be promoted that one must be a season ticket member in order to access tickets to the away game at the University of Iowa.

R. Sedevie wrapped up with discussion on the Huskie Fan Advisory Board. Invitations to the current members have been extended to renew their membership for next year. R. Sedevie does not anticipate a high turnover as all the members seem very engaged. He also noted that the Huskie Fan Advisory Board will be included in the strategic planning process, plans which will start taking place in early April.

VII. **Athletic Department Reports:**

- a. **2016-2017 NCAA Financial Report and Athletic Department Budget Discussion** – D. Boughton did a PowerPoint Presentation on the NCAA Financial Report, which is an annual report of fiscal year activity that categorizes an athletic department’s revenue and expenses into 20 and 22 categories respectively, in aggregate and by sport program. All Division I Athletic departments are required to complete this report, due to the NCAA by January following the end of the fiscal year. In D. Boughton’s presentation, she provided a list of the categories for both revenue and expenses and indicated that in the 2016-2017 fiscal year NIU’s overall revenue exceeded their overall expenses by \$134,202. Factors in this variance included non-participation in a Bowl game for the first time in several years, no internal purchasing of tickets (NCAA mandated every other year), Conference distribution variance, Student-Athlete financial aid variance (one-tuition rate), and decreases in facilities improvements.

The final slide of the PowerPoint was little known facts about the Athletic department’s budget. T. Bough asked if the average salary for NIU’s head coaches (\$136,375) was the norm across the MAC. D. Boughton replied that comparatively, sport to sport, NIU is pretty low for on the scale.

- b. **Revenue generation** – T. Feuerbach provided a handout to the group, noting that the football and basketball premium area sales were down this year, but they are optimistic for next year.
- c. **Title IX compliance presentation, participation report** – D. Boughton did an overview discussion of Title IX. There are three tests for compliance with Title IX: 1. Accommodation of Interests and abilities, 2. Athletic financial aid, and 3. Other athletic benefits and opportunities.

To test the accommodation of interests and abilities, Athletics has to meet one of three tests (proportionality, continued program expansion for the underrepresented sex, or fully and effectively accommodating the underrepresented sex). NIU meets compliance with test one based on the fact that the male undergraduate population is larger than the female undergraduate population. In order to continue compliance with test one, Athletics must be diligent in meeting roster goals.

The second test in compliance is Athletics' financial aid. Athletics' financial aid awards must be awarded proportionally, within 1%, to unduplicated participation rates. In 2016-2017, Athletics awarded \$7,757,914 in total aid, \$4,609,538 (59.4%) to male athletes and \$3,148,376 (40.6%) to female athletes. In order to achieve full compliance in this area, Athletics must fully fund all sports programs (235.5 scholarships), implement the increasing value of a full grant to aid in cost of attendance, practice non-discriminatory awarding of in-state versus out-of-state scholarships, and apply non-discriminatory practices of awarding fifth-year and medically disqualified financial aid.

The final test is a "laundry list" of additional opportunities and benefits. Compliance does not necessarily mean an exact replication of said benefits, but equitable availability. D. Boughton concluded that while she oversees Title IX generally, ensuring and maintaining compliance is a cooperative effort between all the Athletics Sport Administrators.

#### VIII. **Announcements**

- a. **"Cram the Convo"** – February 17
- b. **Victor E. Ball** – April 14 @ NIU, Naperville Campus  
The night will include keynote speakers, returning MC Adam Lebowski, and guest auctioneer Brett Walkow. You can register online, with the Huskie Athletic Fund, or directly with Lisa Stocksdale or TJ Feuerbach. L. Stocksdale enlisted the aid of the Board members to help them get the word out.

#### IX. **Closing Remarks/Adjournment**

- a. The next Athletic Board meeting will be on April 18, 2018. J. Salmon made a motion to close the meeting at 2:33pm; P. Garrity seconded.