



ATHLETIC BOARD MEETING
November 28, 2018 – 2:00 pm

Present: Mark Groza (Chair), Joe Bittorf, Thomas Bough, Sean Frazier, Pete Garrity, Mike Konen, Kathy Ladell, Brian McCormick, Vicky Nay, Michael Oswalt, Erick Pinter, Glen Roby, Lara Sala, Ryan Sedevie, Kamron Smith, Nikole Torres-Turnage

Guests: Debra Boughton, Sr. Assoc. AD/Finance & Operations/SWA; John Cheney, Exec. Assoc. AD; Melissa Dawson, Sr. Assoc. AD/Director of SAASS; TJ Feuerbach, Sr. Assoc. AD/Development & Revenue Generation; Ryan Sedevie, Sr. Assoc. AD/External Affairs; Lisa Stocksdale, Assoc. AD/Human Resources & Donor Relations; Courtney Vinson, Sr. Assoc. AD/Sports Administration; Brad Hoey,

- I. **Call to Order** – M. Groza called the meeting to order at 1:59 pm.
- II. **Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes** – J. Bittorf moved to approve; B. McCormick seconded; motion carried unanimously.
- III. **Faculty Athletics Representative** – M. Groza noted that the Football Bowl game determination will be this Sunday. Athletics is working through logistics with the possibility of a potential bowl game on 12/15 (finals week).

M. Groza also spoke briefly on the new transparency initiative undertaken by President Freeman. While all information can be requested through FOIA, President Freeman has created a portal/transparency database in which the Sr. Administrators (and now Head Coaches) contracts are public.

- IV. **Athletics Director Update** – S. Frazier provided the group with a handout. The football team won the MAC West and will be advancing to the MAC Championship. Sutton Smith earned multiple MAC awards, including MAC Defensive Player of the Year and Player of the Year, and Max Scharping was a finalist for the William V. Campbell Trophy for Top-Scholar Athlete in college football.

S. Frazier commented on Athletics student-athletes' continued academic successes and gave kudos to M. Dawson, the SAASS staff, and coaching staff. He briefly recapped the HAF Huskies Invest Week of Giving, and remarked on the Drive for 25 initiative and the upcoming Victor E. Ball, which will be hosted on Saturday, April 27th, 2019 and the NIU Naperville campus.

- V. **Major Issues:**
NCAA Football Game Day Attendance Policy/Ticket buyback program – J. Cheney discussed ticket buybacks, answering questions that may have stemmed from recent articles alluding to wrongdoing on behalf of NIU Athletics. The NCAA requires institutions to meet minimum requirements in order to maintain FBS status. One requirement is scheduling; at least 60% of all games must be played against FBS members and at least five home games against members of FBS. Another requirement is attendance, broken down by actual versus paid, during a rolling two-year period. With paid attendance, NIU can buy its own tickets to make up the difference if they do not meet the 15,000 minimum set by the NCAA. This can be done every two years; since NIU did this last year they will not do it this year. This process is not new or unique. A member of the group asked if other MAC schools do this to which J. Cheney replied that they do.

One issue in recording actual attendance has been with the student population. Many students will come to the tailgate areas, but few will actually go to the game (2,000 students at tailgate vs. 500 at game). Per the auditors, the students have to actually enter the stadium to count toward the attendance numbers. J. Cheney mentioned that this year they attempted to do the Huskie 100s to engage student attendance; for every 1,000 students, 10 students would be drawn to win \$100. While not as successful as they hoped, J. Cheney feels that the concept still has potential. Another idea is to possibly turn the End Zone

Club into a student area. Athletics is working with multiple student organizations and Greeks to figure out logistics.

Another question was the purpose of this particular NCAA bylaw. C. Vinson answered from a Compliance standpoint that the purpose is, essentially, to show a fan base. D. Boughton commented that there has been discussions nationally of amending or removing this requirement.

VI. **Liaison Reports:**

- a. **Diversity Integration Group (D.I.G.)** – C. Vinson noted that they are currently working through the previous D.I.G. action plan and are looking at objectives for next year. One initiative, in conjuncture with Staff/Student services, is coordinating a staff/family event around a sporting event.
- b. **Finance and Facilities** – J. Bittorf provided an update on some of the facility projects in Athletics, noting that there are four major projects that have or are in the works: 1. Convocation Center Video Board Upgrade, 2. Nelson Club Suite renovation (eta mid-January completion), 3. New Nutrition Center, and 4. Baseball/Softball Bleacher Wrap, which has been ordered and will go up mid-March.

Negotiations for an Apparel and Campus Pouring/Naming/Vending RFP are still ongoing. Upcoming events include: Trevor Noah (12/09), WWE (details to come after Thanksgiving), and Cheer events (11/29-12/2).

- c. **Student Staff Services** – L. Stocksdale noted that the Student Staff Services working group has had a slow start, and are looking into possibly shifting focus (staff separate from student side). The group recently did a staff Halloween event that was very successful, and will be working with campus on future trainings. Between now and January the group will work on a Mission statement.
- d. **External Affairs** – The External Affairs working group last met in October. R. Sedevie indicated that the group just recently added Kelly Olson from student affairs. Some of the current topics of discussion include the ongoing RFPs and Trademark/Licensing Agreements. The group will meet again next Thursday.

VII. **Athletic Department Reports:**

- a. **2018-2021 Strategic Plan Overview** – D. Boughton did a PowerPoint presentation overview of the 2018-2021 Athletics Strategic Plan. Beverly & Associates met with several people (Huskie Fan Advisory Board, M. Groza, Sr. Staff members, Student-Athletes, etc.) and make recommendations for the Strategic Plan based on input obtained during these initial meetings. During the months after Beverly & Associates made their recommendations, the Strategic Plan working group met and delved into the plan. From these meetings, they came up with the Huskie P.A.C. (Promoting Athletes to Champions), and a new mission statement. They also came up with the four Pillars of Excellence: 1. Student-Athlete Experience – The #1 thing student-athletes wanted was recognition for their individual and team academic accomplishments. 2. Communication & the NIU Family – How do we promote our story? How are our partnerships with campus? 3. Community Connection – Establishing and maintaining relationships outside of NIU. 4. Financial Stability – Stability is the key term; staff retention, hiring is hard and it is expensive to replace people.
- b. **Huskies Invest and Four Pillars** – T. Feuerbach discussed the four pillars of the Huskie Athletic Fund (HAF). Pillar I is the Annual Fund, which includes initiatives like Drive for 25, an effort by the HAF to get to 2,500 active members (currently around 1,100 members). Pillar II is the Victor E. Ball, which directly supports Cost of Attendance. Pillar III is Gift-in-Kind, which is donated goods/services (food/drinks, facilities, etc.). Pillar IV is Huskies Invest, an online fundraiser which launched last year with a goal of \$100,000. This year the goal was \$200,000, and the actual total raised was \$272,887.
- c. **SAAC Initiatives** – K. Smith briefly described the role of SAAC and some of their current initiatives, including the Victors, obtaining enhanced mental health support for student-athletes, and creating a

Constitution/Mission Statement to explain their goals. M. Dawson noted that in the past SAAC members were nominated by coaches which led to some members not wanting to be a part of the group. The MAC now reaches out to former SAAC members for recommendations, which has led to a far more engaged group.

d. **Evaluation of staff and coaches overview** – L. Stockdale provided the group with an overview on the Athletics' staff and coach evaluation process. SPS staff evaluation tools include a 360 Assessment and employee self-evaluation. Coach evaluation tools include a student-athlete program evaluation, student-athlete exit interview survey (seniors only), 360 Assessment, and self-evaluation. Evaluations are conducted at the end of the sport program competitive season for coaches, annually for SPS, and as designated by HR for Civil Service. The process begins with the 360 link, which is sent to the employee's peers, to be completed by a set deadline. The employee is also asked to complete and submit their self-evaluation to their supervisor.

e. **Football/Volleyball season ticket prices** – J. Cheney went over the season ticket prices for next year, noting that the pricing would not be changing drastically. One thing that worked well this year was the Huskie Family Pack, so they will keep using that next year.

J. Cheney also provided a quick overview of the information that they have regarding the upcoming Football season: NIU plays Illinois State on August 31st, and will likely have no home games in September. There will also be no game the week of Thanksgiving as it is the IHSA Championships.

f. **Title IX Overview and 17-18 Report on Compliance** – D. Boughton presented a PowerPoint on Title IX. Title IX requires that both genders have equal opportunities to participate in sports and receive the benefits of competitive athletics, however institutions do not actually have to offer any particular sport or fund sports equally if there are nondiscriminatory reasons for the differences. There are three tests for compliance with Title IX: 1. Accommodation of Interests and abilities, 2. Athletic financial aid, and 3. Additional athletic benefits and opportunities.

To test 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 unique circumstance in which our male undergraduate population is larger than the female undergraduate population (51/49). In order to continue compliance with test one, Athletics must be attentive in meeting roster goals.

The second test in compliance is Athletics' financial aid. Financial aid awards must be awarded proportionally, within 1%, to unduplicated participation rates. In 2017-2018, Athletics awarded \$7,610,214 in total aid, \$4,594,519 (60.4%) to male athletes and \$3,015,695 (39.6%) to female athletes. In order to achieve full compliance, 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 meeting all additional items, rather having equitable availability to all genders.

VIII. **Announcements**

Victor E. Ball – T. Feuerbach April 27, 2019 NIU, Naperville Campus

IX. **Closing Remarks/Adjournment**

The next Athletic Board meeting will be on February 13, 2019. V. Nay made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 3:30pm; P. Garrity seconded; motion carried unanimously.