



ATHLETIC BOARD MEETING
September 11, 2019 – 2:00 pm

Present: Mark Groza (Chair), Tim Aurand, Joe Bittorf, Thomas Bough, Sean Frazier, Pete Garrity, Lydia Gerzel-Short (for Ericka Pinter), Laura Sala, Josephine Umoren

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/Collegiate Advancement & External Affairs; Lisa Stocksdale, Assoc. AD/Human Resources & Donor Relations; Courtney Vinson, Sr. Assoc. AD/Sports Administration; Eric Burns, Women's Tennis Head Coach; John Carlson, Men's Golf Head Coach

- I. **Call to Order** – M. Groza called the meeting to order at 2:03 pm.
- II. **Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes** – P. Garrity moved to approve; T. Bough seconded; motion carried unanimously.
- III. **Faculty Athletics Representative** – M. Groza welcomed the group and introduced Dr. Tim Aurand from the College of Business as a new member of the Board. M. Groza then asked S. Frazier to do a quick introduction of the two new Head Coaches in Athletics.

S. Frazier first gave kudos to the administration team for their work on completing these hires. Eric Burns was introduced as the new Women's Tennis Head Coach and John Carlson as the Men's Golf Head Coach. E. Burns remarked that this will be his 18th year as a Head Coach, and that after many years with IPFW and Wright State, he is excited to be at NIU and to take the program to the next level. J. Carlson came to NIU after 10 years with the University of Minnesota and a Big 10 Championship win. He noted that the NIU Men's Golf team is young, but he is looking forward to helping them improve this season.

M. Groza then provided a brief overview of the responsibilities of the Board and had the members introduce themselves. M. Groza noted that the Board is housed under the University Council and its main function is to advise, monitor and ensure compliance. M. Groza encouraged the members to read through the Policies and Procedures manual.

M. Groza briefly explained a situation with Follett and the bookstore that is impacting student-athletes. Students have been unable to acquire their books on time, and M. Groza asked the group to make sure to communicate this information with their departments. L. Gerzel-Short (standing in for E. Pinter) expanded on the issue, noting that the issue has affected all students campus-wide, not just student-athletes. T. Bough asked if there was any way to partner with the VCB since this is the 2nd year of issues with Follett. D. Boughton answered that the University is committed to a 7-year contract with Follett. P. Garrity asked if books are ordered based on enrollment numbers. L. Gerzel-Short responded that the numbers were never adjusted when the previous bookstore manager left, and suggested electronic books while waiting for hard copies. M. Dawson answered that electronic book ordering could raise compliance issues and D. Boughton remarked that there would also be an issue from a financial perspective as the University has a contractual obligation with Follett to provide specific books.

M. Groza brought to the group's attention an Athletic Board policy that states no contest can be scheduled one day before finals, and that contests scheduled two days prior have to be on-campus. Last fall (2018) Men's Basketball was granted an exception from the Athletics Board to play against Butler on the Saturday prior to finals. This year Men's Basketball scheduled a contest in California on the Saturday before finals and did not seek nor did they receive an exception from the Athletics Board. T. Bough asked as to how this was determined without deliberation, remarking that the Men's Basketball program historically tends to have the lowest GPA in Athletics. C. Vinson responded that this was an oversight by Head Coach Mark Montgomery based on an obligation made last year to Davis. S. Frazier took responsibility for the error, noting that it will not happen again. D. Boughton said that the rule was reviewed years ago and that the student-athletes were adamant that the rule not change, and she suggested that it may be time to revisit the topic.

IV. **Athletics Director Update** – S. Frazier provided the group with several handouts and began with a brief overview of the fall sports, which are in full swing. Football has one of the toughest non-conference schedules in the country and will be heading to Nebraska this week. The Cross Country team won their 1st meet and will be hosting the MAC Championships on November 2nd.

S. Frazier drew attention to the Academic Overview document and remarked on the academic achievements, giving praise to the staff and faculty that have helped along the way. When he first started at the University, the student-athletes' cumulative GPA was 2.9. Through the efforts of M. Dawson and the SAASS team, the cumulative GPA is now 3.2.

He then brought attention to the Revenue Generation Overview document, noting that upon his arrival at the University, there were a lot of low-lying fruit. Athletics has started to see some real growth on "seeds" that were planted (i.e. Sodexo, Huskies Invest, Victor E. Ball, Vivature, etc.). S. Frazier commented that the football premium areas have leveled off and indicated that they have now shifted their focus to providing more options to fans. S. Frazier also took the opportunity to note that D. Boughton has taken on a new role with Revenue Generation. J. Bittorf asked about football game guarantees. S. Frazier remarked that the budget has been a big factor in some of the contests, like Florida State last year or Michigan in the future. S. Frazier indicated that they need to be more aggressive in getting game guarantees back since bigger schools will pay to have NIU come to them, but won't return the game in DeKalb.

V. **Liaison Reports:**

a. **Diversity Integration Group (D.I.G.)** – The Diversity Integration Group met today. C. Vinson's goal with D.I.G. is to partner with the Academic Cultural Centers (Black Studies, Latino Resource Center, Gender Sexuality Resource Center, Asian Resource Center, Military, etc.) and find different ways to integrate and get student-athletes involved on campus. M. Groza asked if there were any volunteers to serve as the Athletic Board liaison for D.I.G. and if anyone was interested to please contact either himself or C. Vinson.

b. **Finance and Facilities** – J. Bittorf indicated that the Finance and Facilities group met this morning and he appreciated the open feeling of collaboration, stating that being able to discuss issues impacting others was very useful. Some of the items discussed included: the Nelson Club, Nutrition Center, Chessick upgrade to LED lights, Soccer field Press Box, Equipment Room Laundry facilities, etc. Items in the mill: Yordon Center refresh, LED lighting in Victor E. Court and Arena, Baseball turf replacement. Upcoming events: Trevor

Noah (10/12), Young the Giant (10/25), Special Olympics, Red/Black Band Event (which brings in approximately 6k-7k people). P. Garrity asked about Naming Rights. J. Cheney responded that they have put the opportunity out publicly three times and that they just have not been able to land anyone yet.

- c. **External Affairs** – R. Sedevie remarked on the transition as they have lost six members. He has been reaching out across campus to find new members and plans on meeting again in October, then every 1st Thursday of the month.

VI.

Athletic Department Reports:

- a. **2018 – 2021 Strategic Plan Update** – D. Boughton presented the Athletics' Strategic Plan via PowerPoint. There are four pillars, with one liaison from each of the following areas: Coach, Sr. Staff, student-athlete and HFAB representative. The first pillar is Student-Athlete Experience. M. Dawson noted that the student-athletes want a recognition event for when they achieve 4.0 GPA's. D. Boughton remarked on how great it is that the student-athletes want to be recognized for their academic achievements. Additional areas for enhancing the student-athlete experience include prioritizing lounge area spaces, upgrading the mental health services through Northwestern Medicine, and more. Pillar Two focuses on Communication and the NIU family. D. Boughton talked about some of the current goals for Pillar Two which include implementing a Faculty/Staff appreciation event and working with the Admissions office on including the Convocation Center in the orientation/tours process. D. Boughton also discussed the implementation of Microsoft Teams, which will bring in a new way to communicate interdepartmentally. Pillar Three is Community Connections, achieved through encouraging student-athletes to have more direct connections with the community, utilizing HFAB feedback, and the partnership with Huskies Sports Properties. Financial Stability is Pillar Four. To achieve financial stability D. Boughton discussed the continuance of the Victor E. Ball, starting a Season Ticket Holder Referral Program, and outsourcing camp ownership.
- b. **Complimentary Ticket Policy (FB, VB, WBB, MBB)** – J. Cheney provided the group with the Complimentary Ticket Policy for Football, Volleyball and Men and Women's Basketball. He noted that the policy has not changed and that all tickets are audited/monitored by the ticket office.
- c. **Facilities Improvements (prior year) and FY Plan** – M. Groza wanted the group to know that all facilities improvements must be equitable. J. Cheney expanded that they need to be equitable but that does not necessarily mean equal. He provided a handout which listed the Athletics' facilities enhancements from FY19-FY20.
- d. **Prior Year IPP Review** – C. Vinson provided a brief overview of IPP Review. IPP is a combination of APR and GSR (GSR is the way the NCAA tracks Athletics' movements). The GSR reports will be coming in November. APR is a real-time metric that measures eligibility and retention points. M. Groza will review the GSR when the reports come out in November and the APR in February.
- e. **SAASS Academic Report (prior year)** – M. Dawson went over some highlights from the SAASS Academic Report (handout provided) and drew attention to the 2nd page of the report which provides a good visual perspective. T. Aurand asked if there were any teams

close to NCAA penalty to which M. Dawson responded that there weren't. T. Aurand then asked if/how a team is penalized. C. Vinson indicated that if a team does not meet the APR, the NCAA has penalties; for example, they can require reduction/restriction of practice times. S. Frazier also remarked that any team that drops below 930 cannot participate in a NCAA Championship.

- f. **Current FY Budget Report** – D. Boughton provided a high-level overview of the FY20 budget. Decrease in enrollment (student fees) and ticket sales, on top of another requested budget reduction by the University have all impacted the FY20 budget landscape. On the other side, revenue enhancements can be expected in an increase in the Huskies Sports Properties contractual capital and promotional dollars from Adidas. D. Boughton discussed the budget priorities of the department, including supporting student-athlete scholarships and summer school. D. Boughton noted that salary increases mandated by the University for Graduate Assistants and Union contracts have also put a strain on resources. D. Boughton also went over the sources and uses of funds. Some of the main sources are tuition waivers, University support, NCAA/Conference funding, and Convocation Center/Huskie Stadium revenue. Nearly 50% of the budget goes into personnel (salaries) and scholarships. D. Boughton noted that this was on par with other Universities percentage-wise.

VII. **Announcements** – The next Athletic Board meeting will be November 20, 2019.

VIII. **Closing Remarks/Adjournment** – T. Bough moved to adjourn; T. Aurand seconded; meeting closed at 3:59pm.