



ATHLETIC BOARD MEETING
November 20, 2019 – 2:00 pm

Present: Mark Groza (Chair), Tim Aurand, Thomas Bough, Chris Dawe, Marc Falkoff, Sean Frazier, Lesley Gilbert, Mike Konen, Glenn Roby, Amberly Rodriguez, Laura Sala, Aidan Shields, Kamron Smith

Guests: 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; Matt Varnadoe, Assistant AD/Compliance; Zach Cahill, Director Sports Performance

- I. **Call to Order** – M. Groza called the meeting to order at 2:01 pm.
- II. **Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes** – G. Roby moved to approve; L. Gilbert seconded; motion carried unanimously.
- III. **Faculty Athletics Representative**
 - a. **2019 GSR Report** – A handout was provided showing NIU’s Graduation Success Rate over the past five years. M. Groza pointed out that NIU is above the national average and has multiple sport programs with 100% GSR. Based on the information provided, the NIU student-athlete GSR is approximately 13% higher than other division I Universities and well above the national average. C. Dawe asked if there was a target/goal or if the GSR was part of the Strategic Plan. M. Dawson responded that the GSR is not necessarily a bullet point on the Strategic Plan, but that the target is to get above 85%. She remarked that there are certain factors that cannot be controlled (i.e. transfers), so GSR is more of a goal than anything. M. Groza interjected that the GSR is a great metric, but that the APR is more sanctioned and of higher focus from the NCAA perspective.
 - b. **NCAA Hot Topic: NIL & NCAA Recommendations** – M. Groza wanted to briefly discuss a topic that has garnered significant attention in the past few months. The state of California submitted a bill, anticipated to go into effect in 2023, to make it legal for student-athletes to be compensated for the use of their name/image/likeness, which the NCAA has had strict rules against. There are over 20 states with similar bills. M. Groza provided a handout to the group from the NCAA Board of Governors’ Action on Report of Federal and State Legislation Working Group. He remarked that after a recent conference call, a key takeaway is that nothing has changed yet, and that the soonest any changes in policy and bylaws could occur is spring of 2021. M. Varnadoe reiterated that the news has been very misleading and that it is important to know that nothing has changed yet. K. Smith spoke from a student-athlete perspective, indicating that student-athletes are concerned about the impact on their scholarships and possible taxation of said scholarships. M. Groza reaffirmed that nothing has changed, and that the next several months will be interesting to see where the conversation goes.
 - c. **NIU Admissions Policy: Proposed Changes** – NIU is moving away from using SAT/ACT scores as an admission requirement. One thing to note, the NCAA Clearing House still requires SAT/ACT scores for students to be allowed to compete in NIU Athletics competitions. M. Groza remarked that from an internal perspective, the Faculty Senate was overwhelmingly in

favor of this change, which would take effect in 2021. The framework of acceptance: High School GPA 3.0 or above = accepted; 2.5-2.99 = holistic review by Admissions office; 2.0-2.49 = committee review. M. Groza asked for thoughts. J. Cheney remarked on concerns with walk-ons, pointing out students who didn't take the SAT/ACT prior to enrollment, would be rendered ineligible since it is still required by the NCAA.

IV. **Athletics Director Update** – S. Frazier provided a brief update on the fall sports. NIU Athletics hosted the Cross Country MAC Championships, taking home 2nd place as a team and an individual win for Ashley Tutt, a first in NIU history. S. Frazier remarked that this fall has not been a banner year. The football team has not performed as well as projected, and while the men and women's soccer teams have had small successes this season, both did not come together overall. In terms of academics, the Huskies continue to achieve, with seven teams achieving 100% GSR. S. Frazier indicated how proud he was of the SAASS team, coaches, staff and student-athletes.

S. Frazier provided a recap on Huskies Invest, a week-long online fundraiser for the Athletics program, commenting that the goal of \$300,000 was achieved. He also noted that the Victor E. Ball, the Athletics' premier fundraiser for student-athlete cost of attendance, will be rebranded/refreshed. He asked R. Sedevie to provide additional details on the changes. R. Sedevie indicated that feedback from the past years is that a black-tie event is not necessarily within our demographic. They will be moving the event back to the NIU Convocation Center with a more casual dress code. The hope of making these changes are to increase attendance and meet the goal of \$150,000. Lastly, S. Frazier said a quick thank you to Laura Sala, the Procurement office, the President, and the administrative staff who had a hand in assisting with the execution of the Adidas contract.

S. Frazier wrapped up the AD update with an introduction of Matt Varnadoe, the new Assistant Athletics Director for Compliance. Matt was formerly the Compliance Director at James Madison University, and comes to NIU highly regarded with the goal of increasing education.

V. **Liaison Reports:**

a. **Diversity Integration Group (D.I.G.)** – M. Groza noted that D.I.G. is still looking to fill the role of liaison. The group meets approximately once a month. If interested, please either reach out to M. Groza or C. Vinson.

C. Vinson was not at the meeting, but sent a list of bullet points on some of the agenda items from the group:

- i. D.I.G. is collaborating with the College of Black Studies on Soul Fridays;
- ii. Worked with ROTC to set up a Remembrance table and half-time recognition at the Men's Basketball game;
- iii. Sponsored the Diversity Ball earlier this month.

b. **Finance and Facilities** – This group meets every six weeks or so and consists of a large group from various financial groups across campus. They just met on October 23rd and will meet again on December 4th.

i. **Facilities Updates:**

- a. Curb cuts to be made for more accessibility to the ticket office.

- b. The Chessick Practice Center LED lighting will be updated over winter break – will take approximately 3 ½ years to pay itself back.
 - c. The equipment room staff was consolidated from 3 to 2.
 - d. Equipment room laundry upgrades to occur over break.
 - ii. Campus Updates:
 - a. Holmes Student Center soft opening brought great improvements, with more to come. State funded projects are being prioritized.
 - iii. Procurement Updates:
 - a. Vendor fair – emphasis of Minority businesses (Anything over \$200,000 = bid)
 - b. Adidas Contract discussed.
 - c. Pouring Rights are still under review.
 - d. Bowl Planning no longer needed.
 - e. P-Cards and Controller’s systems discussed. M. Groza commented that the changes with P-Cards will bring a great relief for coaches and recruiting. The personal costs were high and the changes will help coaches immensely.
 - iv. Upcoming events include: Young the Giant (near Homecoming); Harlem Globetrotters (January); IHSA (next week).
- c. **External Affairs** – R. Sedevie mentioned the transition in Athletics and the restructure/reassigning of duties. A current focus of the group is student engagement, asking how we continue to engage with students. Initiatives include the introduction of the Fatty’s Football Touchdown Village and the reengagement of Red Riot. The next meeting will be on December 5th at 11:00AM in CV200; all are welcome.

VI. **Athletic Department Reports:**

- a. **SAAC Initiatives** – K. Smith discussed the role of SAAC, noting that they meet with other student-athletes from other schools to discuss legislation, meeting approximately once a month. K. Smith mentioned an Executive Board meeting coming up in December to discuss creating a voting committee to stress the importance of voting on campus. They are also working on starting a new committee, “Campus Connect”, to promote togetherness and inter-sport inclusion. A. Rodriguez discussed some of the things the group did for Diversity and Inclusion week, including social media blasts, wearing and distributing bracelets, and working with teams to promote diversity and inclusion at the soccer and football games. SAAC is also engaging with local elementary schools by having student-athletes read books to the kids focused on inclusion, diversity and mental health.

The MAC Mental Health Summit will be on February 3rd in Cleveland, and SAAC representatives will attend. G. Roby asked what kind of information the students bring back from the MAC Mental Health Summit. K. Smith responded that the goal is to bring back information that they can put into a PowerPoint for the coaches to share with their teams. M. Dawson also remarked that SAASS has a counselor from Counseling and Consultation Services come out to SAASS once a week to talk to the student-athletes. G. Roby was excited to hear the awareness and growth SAASS has brought to the area of mental health.

b. **Sports Performance Overview** – Z. Cahill presented to the group an overview of the sports performance area. He noted that they are trying to get away from the title “Strength and Conditioning” as what they do is really geared toward general sports performance.

i. Goals:

- a. Maximize student-athlete opportunities;
- b. Reduce risk of injury – not always a clear cut answer (i.e. multiple factors like sleep, stress, etc.);
- c. Maximize physical qualities;
- d. Championship mindset – the sports performance staff have to be in tune with the coaches on what they are looking for from the student-athletes;
- e. Provide an overall positive experience – workouts are not always fun, but can come out ahead.

The ideal ratio of staff to student is approximately one coach for every 10-15 student-athletes. Workouts may include similar exercises but are specifically tailored to each sport. The nature of each sports’ needs may change, which is why sports performance staff have to work closely with coaches (i.e. softball team used to have a lot of big hitters, but new team’s focus is speed).

Another critical area is student-athlete health. Sports performance staff work in close collaboration with athletic trainers and coaches. If an athlete is injured, the sports performance staff have to work on a training plan that can be done while the athlete is injured that will keep them in playing shape for when they are cleared to return to their sport. Sports performance staff also have to know the medical needs of the student-athletes. For example, if an athlete has sickle-cell or asthma, they have to make sure to have the appropriate safety mechanisms in place (i.e. athletic trainer on-site, oxygen ready, etc.).

Z. Cahill closed by noting that his plans for the future of their program is to maximize their partnerships with Northwestern Medicine, Glanbia, and other on-campus resources like Dietician and KNPE programs).

c. **Football/Volleyball Season Ticket Prices** – J. Cheney provided a handout with a breakdown of the football and volleyball season ticket prices. The football season ticket prices will see a slight (20%) increase. There will be six home games, with a possibility of an off-campus game for the sixth game (i.e. Chi-town Showdown). No changes were made to the volleyball season ticket prices.

VII. **Announcements/Adjournment** – S. Frazier brought up the Athletics Annual Report, which was sent electronically to the group. He noted if anyone in the group would like a physical copy to please see himself of Lynsey Bernardy in the Athletics Administration offices.

The next Athletic Board meeting will be February 12, 2020.

G. Roby made motion to adjourn the meeting; C. Dawe seconded; meeting closed at 3:29pm.