



VIRTUAL ATHLETIC BOARD MEETING

February 10, 2021 – 2:00 pm

Present: Mark Groza (Chair), Ehsan Asoudegi, Tim Aurand, Sarah Cain, Pete Garrity, Lesley Gilbert, Michael Konen, Danae Miesbauer, Michael Oswalt, Glenn Roby, Malcolm Roebuck, Laura Sala

Guests: Debra Boughton, Sr. Assoc. AD/Finance & Operations/SWA; John Cheney, Exec. Assoc. AD; Lisa DeRango, Sr. Assoc. AD/Human Resources & Donor Relations; TJ Feuerbach, Sr. Assoc. AD/Development & Revenue Generation; Anton Goff, Sr. Assoc. AD/Director of SAASS; Ryan Sedevie, Sr. Assoc. AD/Collegiate Advancement & External Affairs; Courtney Vinson, Sr. Assoc. AD/Sports Administration

- I. **Call to Order** – M. Groza called the meeting to order at 2:02pm.
- II. **Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes** – P. Garrity moved to approve; G. Roby seconded; motion carried unanimously.
- III. **Faculty Athletics Representative** – In addition to the sub-topics on the agenda, M. Groza wanted to alert the Board that NIU Athletics was selected to be a part of the NCAA’s audit for academic performance (APR/GSR). The audit being conducted is to ensure that our practices and the practices of the program are being kept to a certain standard. This will take place in spring over the course of 4 to 6 weeks, and will encompass 20 institutions across the country selected at random. M. Groza also noted that the search for the next Men’s Basketball head coach will be commencing soon and that he will be a part of this process.
 - a. **NIL & Transfer Legislation Update** – M Groza briefly updated the group on the status of the NIL and Transfer legislation he brought up in the last Athletic Board meeting (affiliated materials in the Teams folder). A vote was expected by the NCAA in early January, however these items were delayed. M. Groza expects that a vote will happen sometime this spring, though he does not have a specific date. He added that he will be meeting with other FAR’s next week to discuss updates to the intra-conference transfer policy, which currently sets certain limitations on transfers within the conference to and from other MAC institutions. T. Aurand asked if the NCAA votes on this as well, to which M. Groza responded that they do and all member institutions will have a vote.
 - b. **Student-Athlete Majors Breakdown** – One oversight of the Athletic Board, and part of a FAR’s responsibility, is to ensure that there is no clustering of student-athletes by major or classes. M. Groza provided a document in the Teams folder with a list of student-athletes broken down by major. Currently there are around 80 unique majors or combination of majors with six of the seven colleges represented. These numbers show a really good variance of majors with no apparent steering of student-athletes into one particular area.
 - c. **Student-Athlete Course Enrollment (Clustering)** – The FAR receives a class report every fall and spring (document provided in Teams folder). The report shows some clustering, but not an unusual amount according to M. Groza. He indicated that clusters can occasionally occur naturally based on schedules and types of courses (i.e. introductory or required courses might show a higher grouping of student-athletes). E. Asoudegi asked why clustering would be an issue. M. Groza responded that it is not necessarily an issue, however there have been other institutions, like North Carolina several years ago, that may have a large number of

student-athletes taking classes with lower standards tailored to this particular group. A. Goff expanded that in exit interviews at some of those institutions, it was revealed that some student-athletes felt a lack of freedom of choice and were more or less steered toward a certain major or class because they were told they had to in order to fit practice schedules and the like.

IV. **Athletics Director Update** – R. Sedevie provided the Athletic Director update in S. Frazier absence (report in Teams folder). All winter sports are currently in full swing. Women’s basketball is on a four-game win streak (10-6/8-3 MAC). Men’s Basketball has been on pause due to COVID (2-10/1-6 MAC) and are currently in an active search for the next head coach. P. Garrity asked for additional details on what that hiring process will look like. C. Vinson responded that they will be using a search firm, which must first be approved by the Board of Trustees (next meeting on 2/18). Once approved, it will be a national search. Wrestling is doing well (6-3/5-2 MAC) with three wrestlers currently ranked in the Intermat Wrestling Rankings Top 20 in the country. Gymnastics, who are defending their MAC Championship title from 2019, are also off to a good start (2-0 MAC). A number of fall sports were converted to spring due to COVID (Men/Women’s Soccer and Volleyball), and the spring sports have all started training or competition (Baseball, Softball, Men/Women’s Tennis, Men/Women’s Golf), making for a busy spring schedule ahead.

R. Sedevie remarked on the current fan attendance/ticket policy as we move into Phase 4. Attendance restrictions have been lifted to allow up to 50 fans, however no tickets will be sold to the public at this time so that parents of student-athletes of both NIU and the visiting team can attend. R. Sedevie also discussed the upcoming Victor E. Bash, which will be virtual again this year and will likely take place June 3-11 in a similar format to last year. They are hoping to use The Victor’s student-athlete award show as a kickoff to this event, and would like to tie in some type of Summer Circuit content throughout the week.

R. Sedevie wrapped up the AD update with a comment that the MAC is set to announce the conference schedule for Football at the beginning of March. The non-conference schedule is currently set at: NIU at Georgia Tech on 9/04; NIU at home vs. Wyoming on 9/11; NIU at Michigan on 9/18; NIU at home vs. Maine on 9/25.

M. Groza asked if someone from Athletics could provide an update on testing protocols. J. Cheney answered that most teams are testing between 25% and their entire roster depending on what stage they are in (i.e. working out, travel, competition, etc.). The University of Illinois developed and uses a saliva based test (Shield) that NIU is currently working on implementing for all high-contact students like those in residence halls or attending in-person classes. J. Cheney hopes this will also become available to student-athletes. As far as how student-athletes are doing as a whole with testing, despite Men’s Basketball and Women’s Tennis being on pause, most student-athletes are doing the right things with wearing masks and social distancing, and positivity rates are pretty low for the most part. J. Cheney added that the Convocation Center is the regional site for mass distribution of the vaccine in DeKalb County, and they have hosted two to three different clinics per week, administering roughly 900 doses of vaccinations weekly. L. Gilbert asked how student-athletes are handling things from a mental health perspective. J. Cheney felt that overall they seem to be doing well, though students who have been forced to quarantine seemed to have a higher negative impact on their mental health. A. Goff also indicated that from an academic-side of things they have not seen a vast

difference since there are always some levels of stress between balancing athletics and academics. For students that were struggling with the e-learning style, additional academic resources were made available. He expanded that he thinks the department has done a good job of having services available and providing forums for student-athletes to talk about issues like COVID-19, social justice, the cancellation of spring/fall sports, etc. to help digest and deal with some of their emotions.

V. **Liaison Reports:**

- a. **Diversity Integration Group (D.I.G.)** – C. Vinson discussed a couple of MAC initiatives occurring this month. The MAC Diversity and Inclusion week will be February 15th through February 19th and NIU student-athletes will be doing various things throughout the week to support this enterprise. The MAC will also be hosting a conference call on micro-aggressions, either on February 15th or 16th; the call will be open to all student-athletes across the conference.

D.I.G. is currently working through their 2021-22 action plan and actionable items for the next three years, including things to do for Black History Month. C. Vinson expanded that that they would likely have a group of student-athletes attend the *Hateful Things* exhibit at the Pick Museum of Anthropology as one initiative in support of Black History Month. G. Roby asked if the museum exhibit was on campus. C. Vinson answered that it was and posted a link in the Team chat to the event. She indicated that registration was online, and that the museum was very proactive with COVID protocols including safety measures such as temperature checks, spacing requirements and time limits for viewing. She also remarked that the exhibit was available previously virtually, but was not sure if that option was still available. Lastly, to further support Black History Month and in connection with the community, several Athletics staff and student-athletes participated in the DeKalb Library project where they were asked to record themselves reading books written by African American authors out loud and passing on the recordings to the library to post for others to watch/listen to. Participants included Kenya Majors (Track & Field), Haley Hoppe (Women's Soccer), Janae Poisson (Women's Basketball), Sean Frazier (AD), Thomas Hammock (Head Coach, Football), and Ray Gooden (Head Coach, Volleyball).

- b. **Finance and Facilities** – This working group has been paused until fall 2021.
- c. **External Affairs** – R. Sedevie indicated that they met as a group today, but typically meet the 2nd Thursday of every month. The group discussed many of the items that were provided in the AD update, but some items that were not covered included: ticket renewal timelines (mid-March), HAF renewals and guide, and cutout revenue update (317 sold with just short of \$10,000 revenue earned). They also discussed Hall of Fame. T. Feuerbach noted the committee met recently and determined it was best to move the event to fall of 2022. Moving forward, the cycle will now fall on even years (i.e. 2022, 2024, 2026, etc.).

Additional topics of discussion: moving the University's 125th celebration events to this year, Homecoming, the Alumni Association Golf outing (set for June 28th at Cantigny), campus operation plans for fall 2021, and the potential rebranding of Red Riot (proposed new name NIU Dog Pound). The External Affairs working group will meet again on March 11th.

VI. **Athletic Department Reports:**

- a. **Title IX Overview & Prior Year Report on Title IX Compliance** – D. Boughton included a PowerPoint presentation in the Teams folder and provided a quick overview on Title IX compliance from the Athletics’ perspective. Title IX in athletics requires members of both genders to have equal opportunities to participate in sports and receive the benefits of competitive athletics. She pointed out slide 4 on the PowerPoint regarding sport program offerings, noting that the NCAA requires certain types of sport offerings based on the division. For the FBS division (NIU’s division), the requirement is a minimum of 16; NIU currently has 17. The NCAA also has rules and requirements for financial aid, which we are well within the requirements for at NIU. The chart on slide 7 shows a breakdown of the men and women’s sports and the maximum amount of grant in aid that can be offered per sport program. It is important to note that there are federal guidelines on how these should be distributed in addition to the limits that the NCAA has set.

The three ways to test for Title IX compliance include accommodation of interests and abilities, athletic financial aid, and other athletic benefits and opportunities. There are three tests to measure accommodation of interests and abilities:

Test 1 – Proportionality

Test 2 – Continued program expansion for underrepresented sex

Test 3 – Fully and effectively accommodate the underrepresented sex

For last 8 years, NIU has frequently met test one as the male undergraduate population has typically been larger than female undergraduate population; however, in the past 2 years the female population has increased (fall 2019 51.2% / fall 2020 52.8%). This increase impacts the way we approach our compliance with Title IX.

To further expand on measures for test one, D. Boughton discussed who counts. She briefly commented on roster goals and the use of these to maintain compliance in the past, but indicated that with the current sport offerings this would be hard to continue to maintain under test one. Based on data from 2019-20 (the last census year), there were 231 males and 210 female participants in the NIU Athletics department sport programs, which is approximately 11 participants outside of compliance for test one. As they are not close enough to meet test one, the department is looking to try to meet test three. D. Boughton pointed out slide 13 to address test three of fully and effectively accommodating the underrepresented sex. At NIU, from a participation standpoint, women are the underrepresented gender, so in order to meet this test, NIU would have to offer sport programs that accommodate the women who go to NIU or have been admitted to NIU. D. Boughton noted that they are currently working with the OGC and Ethics and Compliance office to develop a survey to measure the interests and abilities of students enrolled and admitted to NIU. Pending potential findings from this survey, there may have to be changes/additions made to the current sport offerings, barring facility limitations (i.e. no acceptable accommodations/facilities for sports such as diving). D. Boughton added that any changes would have to go through the Board of Trustees for approval, and would also be under the purview of the Athletic Board. D. Boughton continued with a quick overview on financial aid, which must be within 1% of unduplicated participation rates. In FY20, NIU Athletics awarded \$6.6 million total (\$3.9 to men and \$2.7 to women). The unduplicated participation rate is 60/40, so NIU is doing well in this area. Finally, D. Boughton wrapped up discussion with the provision of equitable opportunities to both men and women participants in our sports programs (the “laundry list” on slide 19).

- b. **Prior Year NCAA Financial Report & Budget Discussion** – L. DeRango provided three files to the group via the Teams folder, the NCAA report that was submitted into the portal, a variance report showing where we have been over the past couple years, and a PowerPoint. The NCAA report is an annual report that all DI athletic departments are required to do. It encompasses 21 unique revenue and 23 unique expense categories and is due to the NCAA no later than January 15th following the end of each fiscal year. L. DeRango noted that while the report was reviewed by the President’s office, based on multiple extenuating circumstances, they had to upload the report into the NCAA portal prior to final review by our accounting firm. She added that if there are any adjustments or changes that come back from the auditors, they will work directly with the NCAA to make corrections. The NCAA report is similar to other reporting requirements we have including the Illinois Board of Higher Education and the U.S. Department of Education, and that the data is obtained from various sources such as the financial aid office, the athletics business office, the NIU Foundation, and more. L. DeRango referenced the PowerPoint, noting that the Board could find a breakdown of the expense and revenue categories. She highlighted that in 2019-20 the overall revenue ended up exceeding the overall expenses by just a little over \$207,000. FY21 will look quite different since that will be when COVID-19 impact shows (i.e. loss of ticket sales and game guarantees, contribution reductions, increased spending for COVID testing/safety measures, etc.). L. DeRango indicated that she anticipates the hit will be somewhere around \$2.5 to \$5 million.
- c. **HAF Revenue Generating Outcomes** – T. Feuerbach provided the group with a breakdown of the HAF revenue outcomes (document in TEAMS folder). The numbers are not fully accurate as they have not entered renewal season yet, but are fairly self-explanatory. The HAF figures are comprised of outright gifts, pledge payments, GIK, premium seats, etc. (cheat sheet on page 2 shows the breakdown of what is included in those numbers). T. Feuerbach pointed out that the charts show \$600,000 in revenue from Huskies Invest, but only slightly more than that amount total for HAF revenue. He indicated that this is due to offline pledges not making their way through the door yet in addition to some simple accounting transfers still in the works. Some key takeaways included the increase in donors for FY21, which is almost 250-300 more than last year, 11 sport programs saw increased revenues, and unrestricted dollars also increased. T. Feuerbach pointed out page 2 of the document regarding football and basketball premium sales, which saw a significant decline in FY19 and FY20. He noted that this past year the decline was more accounted for by the apprehension of fans to renew ticket membership due to COVID uncertainties, but noted that 33% of football renewals donated their season ticket purchases and 53% rolled their purchases over to FY22. G. Roby asked about the changes in the HAF department’s staff. T. Feuerbach remarked that Clifford Bottigliero retired at end of last fiscal year and will not be replaced at this time. They also recently lost the Assistant AD of Development, Andrew Joannides, and hope to have someone hired in his place by mid-March. There was also a transition in the ticket office in the departure of Tom Reading, who will also ideally be replaced by mid-March.

VII. **Announcements/Adjournment** – M. Groza closed with a note that the next meeting will be on April 14th, and thanked the group for their service to the University and students.

G. Roby made a motion to adjourn; M. Konen seconded; meeting closed at 3:19 pm.

Minutes Approved by Board: April 14, 2021