VIRTUAL ATHLETIC BOARD MEETING
November 18, 2020 – 2:00 pm

Present: Mark Groza (Chair), Ehsan Asoudegi, Sarah Cain, Pete Garrity, Lesley Gilbert, Kari Hickey, Michael Konen, Heidi Kuehl, Danae Miesbauer, Amberly Rodriguez, Malcolm Roebuck, Laura Sala

Guests: 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 2:01 pm.

II. Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes – P. Garrity moved to approve; L. Gilbert seconded; motion carried unanimously.

III. Faculty Athletics Representative – M. Groza asked J. Cheney to update the group on FY22 ticket prices, noting that while the Board does not vote on these amounts, they do review them annually. J. Cheney indicated that the full price breakdown was posted in the Athletic Board Teams folder and provided a quick overview. Football will have six (6) home games next year, and without the Chi-Town Showdown all home games will be played in DeKalb and are included in the season ticket package. Based on the projections, season ticket holders would essentially be paying $25/game at the highest price point and go down from there. J. Cheney also noted that the prices remained relatively the same for volleyball and men and women’s basketball for FY22.

M. Groza brought attention to a previous meeting when the Athletic Board had granted a waiver for the men and women’s basketball teams to compete in a non-conference competition in FY21 during finals week, which is typically prohibited per the Athletic Board policy. M. Groza noted that the waiver was no longer necessary as both team’s schedules were sorted out and no longer conflicted with finals week. C. Vinson added that there is a possibility that a conference game could be scheduled during finals week, however this would not conflict with the Athletic Board policy as they would be in-conference games. M. Groza also discussed another aspect of scheduling, noting that in his role as Faculty Athletic Representative (FAR) he is involved in a lot of the discussion regarding sport program’s spring break travel. This year, as there will be limited disruption to in-class activity due to the vast majority of classes being conducted virtually, Athletics will be able to move forward with some of those spring break trips. He indicated that travel parties will be minimized down to only essential personnel.

P. Garrity asked if there will be an impact to playing sports this fall with Illinois moving back to Enhanced Phase 3. J. Cheney responded that, per the information acquired this morning, the move to Enhanced Phase 3 does not affect collegiate events as they are exempt from that order. The main impact would be to coach and player families being allowed to attend games, but does not currently impact playing.

a. APR Report – M. Groza mentioned that the GSR (Graduation Success Rate) numbers were released today (document provided in the Athletic Board Teams folder). All of NIU’s
numbers are well above the National average, with eight (8) programs with perfect 100% graduation rates (women’s basketball, men and women’s golf, gymnastics, women’s soccer, men and women’s tennis, and volleyball). R. Sedevie added that NIU has had seven (7) consecutive years of having the GSR be between 86-89%. M. Groza also remarked on the APR (Academic Progress Rate) numbers, which should be publicly released early next year. 930 is the “magic number” for APR and all of our programs are above that number (document provided in the Athletic Board Teams folder). C. Vinson added that there might not be a public release of APR next year due to COVID. E. Asoudegi asked for additional information on APR. M. Groza responded that APR measures how well student-athletes are doing based on metrics set by the NCAA in regards to retention and eligibility (i.e. what percentage of student-athletes remained eligible and what percentage returned to the University).

b. Sponsored Admissions Report – M. Groza provided an overview of the Sponsored Admissions Report (formerly Sponsored Admit Process). Previously, students who did not meet both the GPA and standardized test score metric for admission to the University had the opportunity to be a part of this program (document provided in the Athletic Board Teams folder). In 2020, NIU Athletics had 27 sponsored admits under the old standards which used GPA and ACT/SAT scores for admission. Beginning Fall of 2021, only GPA will be considered for admission. Based on the 2021 criteria, the top nine (9) students on the current report would have automatically been admitted. The other 2/3 would go through either an admissions or full committee review. P. Garrity asked if the criteria was set by the NCAA. M. Groza answered that the NCAA has a minimum standard, but that this policy is Institutional, not Athletics. He noted that in FY22, the Institution will admit students based on GPA at the following levels:
- 3.0 and above will be admitted automatically
- 2.5 and above would be subject to a holistic review (Admissions office)
- 2.5 and below would be subject to a full committee review

P. Garrity asked who will be a part of the review process. M. Groza responded that the Admissions office would review the cases of 2.5 and above, while the full committee review for anything below 2.5 would likely be comprised of a more wide-range group of personnel on campus. He noted that he did not know the intricacies of the review process yet, but that this new standard of admissions would begin next year. E. Asoudegi asked if standardized test scores would be taken into consideration at all, noting an example on the current report where an individual had an ACT score of 25, but a GPA of 2.1. M. Groza responded that under these new standards, standardized test scores will not be used in the admissions review process.

c. NIL (Name, Image & Likeness) – M. Groza moved into a quick discussion on upcoming changes to NCAA legislation, which will be voted on in January. NIL (Name, Image and Likeness), if passed, will go into effect August of 2021, and would give student-athletes the ability to profit on their name, image and likeness. The second change would be to transfer eligibility. If passed, student-athletes from all sports transferring from one institution to another would be automatically eligible to play. M. Groza noted that he should have more details by the next meeting in February.
d. **MAC Educational Programming** – M. Groza wrapped up the FAR updates with a brief discussion on some of the educational initiatives going on at the MAC level. He remarked on three (3) programs that were launched this year:

- **Transformational Leadership Badge Program** – launched in the summer and provided an opportunity for student-athletes to get exposure to emerging leadership topics. This program was such a huge success that the MAC will be repeating it in December.
- **Diversity, Equity and Inclusion** – this multi-session initiative was geared toward coaches and administrators. The next session is set for next week.
- **NIL Educational Content** – M. Groza is currently a part of a working group for this initiative, working towards creating educational content for student-athletes to assist them with navigating NIL. He put an Excel document in the Athletic Board Teams folder with a grouping of topics and indicated that the working group is looking for volunteers to help create 5-10 minute video clips based on the suggested topics (i.e. legal structures of business, marketing new businesses, etc.). The intent will be to store all educational content on the Conference website for students to access, hopefully by March or April.

IV. **Athletics Director Update** – S. Frazier was unable to attend the meeting due to team travel, so R. Sedevie provided the Athletic Director’s update (document in the Athletic Board Teams folder). R. Sedevie gave a brief overview of the current fall sports playing. Football’s season opener was on November 5th, and they will be playing six (6) regular season games with the potential of a 7th game if they make it to the MAC Championships. Due to COVID, the only fans allowed in the stands are immediate family members of the players and coaching staff. Cross Country is also in-season. They participated in one regular season meet, which was essentially a prep meet for this weekend, which is the MAC Championships game, hosted in Bowling Green at 1:00PM. Winter programs will also be starting up soon, with men and women’s basketball opening on November 25th at home (double header). Wrestling and gymnastics will start in January of 2021. M. Groza asked about the fan situation for basketball, and R. Sedevie responded that currently no fans are allowed, not even the family members of players and coaches. M. Roebuck asked if there was an update on when volleyball would play. R. Sedevie answered that volleyball has moved to the spring and will be starting practice and competition in January 2021. T. Feuerbach expanded that fan attendance would be structured similarly to men and women’s basketball (i.e. no fans). He also added that men and women’s soccer will play in the spring, starting at the end of February/early March.

R. Sedevie remarked on the Huskies Invest Campaign, noting that they will be rolling the campaign into the NIU Foundation’s Thousand Strong. So far Huskies Invest has raised over $500,000 with over 900 gifts. The goal is to hit the $600,000 mark and over 1,000 gifts by the end of the Thousand Strong Campaign (November 20th). P. Garrity brought up the cutting of Cost of Attendance (COA), which was discussed at the previous meeting, and asked for additional clarification on how COA is calculated and what other MAC schools are doing. C. Vinson answered that the COA for NIU student-athletes was roughly around $2,600-$2,700 a year, broken down into 8 payments across fall/spring. The amount is calculated by the University based on an annual survey to calculate incremental costs above and beyond room and board and tuition (i.e. transportation, books, etc.). She noted that a majority of the MAC schools have also either suspended or drastically reduced their COA this year. M. Groza asked what the total
savings were from cutting COA. L. DeRango responded that total savings were around $633,000. She remarked that while this was cut for FY21, no determinations have been made yet for FY22 and that they are still looking into multiple scenarios. Ultimately the decision will be made by both President Freeman and Athletic Director Sean Frazier. P. Garrity added that he could see the cutting of COA as detrimental to recruiting, especially if other schools are offering it. M. Groza responded that since other MAC schools have also either significantly reduced or eliminated their COA this year, he did not feel this would put us at a competitive disadvantage.

M. Roebuck asked if the fan cutouts would be reused or if fans would have to buy another one for basketball. T. Feuerbach answered that the cutouts are not currently set up to be transferred and are still being sold per sport ($60 for football / $60 for basketball). R. Sedevie also noted that the designs for basketball are different as far as attaching to seating structures (indoor versus outdoor design logistics), so that would also have to be taken into consideration if they were to try to reuse.

V. Liaison Reports:
  a. Diversity Integration Group (D.I.G.) – C. Vinson indicated that the D.I.G. working group is currently working on creating a new action plan. She also added that they now have a Diversity and Inclusion website on niuhuskies.com.
  b. Finance and Facilities – L. DeRango noted that they have not had an opportunity to get together as a working group yet.
  c. External Affairs – R. Sedevie provided a brief overview on some of the initiatives of the External Affairs working group. At their last meeting they introduced Malcolm Roebuck as a new member. They discussed some of the challenges other units on campus are experiencing due to COVID, and looking into events that can be hosted while keeping in mind the mitigation efforts of the state and county. The group also discussed testing protocol for football (4 times/week) and basketball (currently looking at 3 times/week), fan cutouts, the transition to the new Game Day App, Homecoming, the Unity Walk and Huskies Invest.

VI. Athletic Department Reports:
  a. SAAC Initiatives – M. Groza remarked that SAAC (Student-Athlete Advisory Council) is comprised of student-athlete representatives from each sport team. Amberly Rodriguez and Kamron Smith are the current student-athletes leaders of this group. A. Rodriguez gave the Board a quick update on some of the initiatives of SAAC this year, noting that they have been doing a lot of things virtually. They have been working on coming up with community service opportunities and participated in Mental Health Week in early October, where they launched prompts and discussions via Twitter and Instagram. They also participated in the MAC Diversity and Inclusion Summit later in October, and are looking forward to February when they will have a Diversity and Inclusion Week. Finally, the group will start looking into the Victors and ways they can improve the event next year.
  b. Evaluation of Staff and Coaches – L. DeRango provided the group with a copy of the template that is used for Athletics’ SPS staff and coach evaluations in the Athletic Board Teams folder. Sport AD’s will send out a Qualtricks link to various units for feedback on the staff/coach member being evaluated. The Sport AD will also complete the evaluation, and
there is an opportunity for the employee to conduct a self-evaluation. Once completed, the data is compiled and reviewed by the Sport AD and the staff/coach, then by Sean Frazier and the staff/coach. L. DeRango noted that the template has been modified due to COVID, but still hits all the key points. She also remarked that in the past two (2) years, Human Resources has done a robust review of classifications on several positions on campus, so a lot of people have been reclassified and are now being evaluated under the HR evaluation tool/process.

VII. **Announcements/Adjournment** – M. Groza introduced two (2) new members to the Board: Ehsan Asoudegi, representing the College of Engineering and Engineering Technology, and Danae Miesbauer, representing the SPS Council. M. Groza closed with a thank you to the group for their participation on the Athletic Board, and noted that the next meeting will be February 10th. He also drew attention to the State of the University address, and remarked that there is a lot to be thankful for.

K. Hickey made a motion to adjourn the meeting; E. Asoudegi seconded; meeting closed at 3:01 pm.

**Minutes Approved by Board: February 10, 2021**