



ATHLETIC BOARD MEETING
February 16, 2022 – 2:00 pm

Present: Mark Groza (Chair), Tim Aurand, Aaron Fogleman, Pete Garrity, Kari Hickey, Michele Hunt, James McCue, Marcella Otto, Glenn Roby, Lara Sala, Sean Frazier

Guests: John Cheney, Deputy AD/Executive Assoc. AD for Operations; Lisa DeRango, Sr. Assoc. AD/Human Resources & Administration; Anton Goff, Sr. Assoc. AD/Director of SAASS; Courtney Vinson, Sr. Assoc. AD/Sports Administration

- I. **Call to Order** – M. Groza called the meeting to order at 2:04 pm.
 - II. **Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes** – J. McHugh moved to approve; T. Aurand seconded; motion carried unanimously.
 - III. **Faculty Athletics Representative** – M. Groza introduced a new member, James McCue, who is representing the Student Government Association (SGA). J. McCue was recently confirmed as the senate historian for the SGA, and also serves as chair of organizational oversight, vice chair for public affairs and sits on the finance committee. He noted that his goal serving on the Athletic Board is to gather and relay information back to the Senate in an effort to bridge the gap and integrate more smoothly.
 - a. **NCAA Convention Update** – M. Groza discussed the NCAA Convention that was held in January. There was an association-wide vote, which passed by majority rule, on doing away with the old constitution. What this means on a broader scale is that the NCAA will be pushing down more power to each individual division (I, II, and III). Divisions will now be responsible for coming up with their own constitution and rules. The Division I Transformation Committee will be chaired by the SEC Commissioner and the Ohio University Athletic Director, and will review everything from recruiting to eligibility and more. M. Groza did not have any additional information to provide at this point. P. Garrity asked about timeline expectations to which M. Groza responded that he believes the intent is to have draft documents ready to go by this summer/August for implementation by fall 2023.
- Student-Athlete Majors** – M. Groza shared a report (located in the Athletic Board Teams folder) with a breakdown of student-athletes by major. He pointed out that around 80 different majors are being represented by student-athletes at NIU, which is an incredible range. M. Groza remarked on the importance of student-athletes having the freedom to select the major(s) they want, a sentiment shared by athletics' leadership and coaches. The slightly elevated number of student-athletes under "general emphasis" was noted and believed to be correlated to transfer students. M. Groza feels that the university needs to be more transfer-friendly in general, not just to student-athletes. S. Frazier asked A. Goff to provide additional clarity on the degree completion pieces, where we might struggle as an institution relative to class selection, transfers, etc. A. Goff summarized eligibility requirements, stating that a student-athlete, before entering their 3rd year (5th semester), must have 40% of their degree completed to be eligible to participate in whatever sport they play in. By the 7th semester, they need to have 60% of their degree completed, and by the 9th semester, they should have 80% of their degree completed in order to remain eligible to participate in their sport. The issue with some transfer students is

that, depending on the university, not all credits will transfer the same to NIU or major requirements may vary from the previous institution. Those non-equivalent credits then become general credits that may not count toward the intended major, which may impact eligibility based on the percentage of completion requirements. This then leads to some student-athletes who may choose to change their course of study to general emphasis to retain sport eligibility, or they may decide to go to another institution that accepts their credits with no impact to their eligibility requirements. K. Hickey added that the Nursing department has seen the impact of NIU not being “transfer-friendly” and wondered why the state of Illinois has not worked on an articulation agreement with other 4-year institutions. P. Garrity asked if the Board of Higher Education was looking into the 4-year to 4-year institution transfers. M. Groza responded that he is sure it is on the radar, but the focus right now seems to be 2-year (Community College) to 4-year transfer agreements.

A. Goff remarked on the advancement of the transfer portal and the role this has played on the number of transfers not just at NIU, but across the country. A. Goff pointed out that not all student-athletes that enter the transfer portal will come out with any type of scholarship/ financial aid, which then creates another issue of students choosing not to pursue higher education at all. T. Aurand asked if a student-athlete entered the transfer portal, but then decided to come back to NIU, if their scholarship would be waiting for them. C. Vinson responded that the way the legislation is written, if a student-athlete chooses to go into the portal, they take the risk of losing their scholarship. Coaches may choose to give the scholarship back, however they are not obligated to do so. J. McCue asked if they thought the threat of losing their scholarships might deter student-athletes from entering the portal. S. Frazier answered that the transfer portal legislation was driven by student-athletes who wanted the flexibility to transfer whenever they wanted. The unintended consequence was the potential loss of aid, which student-athletes are aware of when entering the portal. M. Groza wrapped up discussion by reaffirming the distribution of majors looks good for NIU and that the transfer issues are a campus discussion, not just an athletics discussion.

- b. **Student-Athlete Course Enrollment (Clustering)** – M. Groza discussed course clustering (report available in the Athletic Board Teams folder). This report is run every year and shows the percentage breakdown of student-athletes by course enrollment. M. Groza noted that there might sometimes be slight upticks in certain courses due to timing issues or type of course (introductory-type courses), but that course clustering has not been an issue at NIU.

- IV. **Athletics Director Update** – S. Frazier provided an update on current events in Athletics (document available in the Athletic Board Teams folder). There was a lot to celebrate in the fall with the MAC Championship wins and post-season play of both men’s soccer and football. Winter sports are in full swing. Men’s basketball has been slow to start with the transition of a new coaching staff and the women’s team has seen a lot of big injuries. Both teams play this weekend in a double header “blackout”. A number of spring sports have also started, currently competing in more temperate climates.

S. Frazier shared that NIU picked up a significant award at the NCAA Convention in January, the NCAA/MOAA Award for Diversity and Inclusion. This award was a fantastic testament to the things going on on-campus, in the community and in the athletics department, and NIU is the

only two-time winner. M. Groza noted that student-athlete involvement really made a difference in NIU being picked as the student-athletes here are very active on campus and in the community. S. Frazier wrapped up the AD report with a few upcoming events. NIU will be hosting the men's golf MAC Championships this year in late April at the White Eagle Golf Club in Naperville, Illinois. Another main event coming up is the annual Victor E. Bash (VEB), a premier fundraising event to help support student-athletes and the athletics department. The VEB will be virtual again this year and is slated for early June (June 7-10th), with various programming including an online auction, the Summer Circuit and a Wine & Spirits Pull.

V. **Liaison Reports:**

- a. **Diversity Integration Group (D.I.G.)** – Glen Roby/C. Vinson – C. Vinson noted that the D.I.G. group just met today and went over things they have already completed and items they have coming up. Items on the radar:
- Partnering with the DeKalb Public Library for women's history month.
 - NIU student-athlete quotes regarding an African American trailblazer, posted on social media (Twitter and Instagram) every day around 10:00AM through the month of February,
 - LGBTQ staff training March 21st and March 23rd.
 - D.I.G. Action Plan.
- b. **Finance and Facilities** – K. Hickey/J. Cheney/L. DeRango – J. Cheney indicated that the Finance and Facilities working group met on January 20th. Their meeting served more as a catch-up with brief information sharing as there was not a lot going on. Key topics included:
- Departments are short-staffed and seeing paperwork/process related issues.
 - Risk Management is still working on a reference guide.
 - Transportation Services has been struggling with having only 2 buses running; they are hoping for more off-campus events to pick up and discussions are being had at the Cabinet level on the direction for transportations bus services.
 - The Budget office down to 1 person.
 - The Controller's office is working on an electronic pilot group for travel vouchers/reimbursements.
 - Ticketmaster 10-year contract is coming up in June and athletics is currently looking into another ticket service provider, Paciolan.
 - Recreation Center locker room repairs – this had previously been approved by the Board of Trustees, however COVID struck, and those reserves were repurposed. Now that Recreation is under athletics, they are looking into renewing the project.
 - J. McCue commented that the Recreation Center submitted their own budget request separate from athletics and wondered why their funding requests were not a part of the overall athletics budget/funding requests. A. Goff responded that there are four separate student fees (athletics, stadium, Convocation Center, and Recreation Center). All areas are on separate budgets and their fees are used for their specific areas (i.e. Recreation student fees are used directly for Recreation facilities/projects). If there was just one student fee, there would be no way to differentiate where that money should go. M. Groza added that he is on the Student Fee Committee, which met in the fall, and that the student fees for FY23 are unchanged from last year.
 - The Chick Evans Tennis facility upgrade project will start on Monday. They will be taking the indoor soccer/hockey floors out and will resurface all the courts. With these newest

upgrades, the Rec will look into expanding their membership services to include tennis as there are no other local facilities equipped. This will not impact the Huskie Food Pantry.

- c. **External Affairs** – T. Aurand/R. Sedevie/ TJ Feuerbach – No report.

VI. **Athletic Department Reports:**

- a. **2021-2022 NCAA Financial Report** – L. DeRango provided a brief overview of the NCAA Financial Report (PowerPoint available in the Athletic Board Teams folder). The NCAA Financial Report is an annual report that submitted with individual institutions' fiscal year activity. It is required that all Division I athletic departments submit their information by January 15th following the end of each fiscal year. *Timeline:* June 30th close of reporting; final reports get to campus around September/October; athletics has approximately two months to complete the report, compiling data from several areas on campus (Foundation, Budget office, Controller's office, Athletics Business office, etc.) that must be reviewed by the President and an outside accounting/auditing partner (James Moore) before it must be submitted to the NCAA.

L. DeRango pointed out the list of categories for athletics revenue (21) and expenses (23), available for review in the PowerPoint. In FY21, which was a COVID year, the overall expenses exceeded revenue by approximately \$593,000. As the original revenue deficit was projected to be over a million dollars, the outcome was far more favorable than anticipated. Some things that aided in closing the gap were budget cuts (15% cost center reductions across the board), cuts to professional development travel, restrictions on regional travel, increased fundraising efforts, etc. On the opposite end, revenue took a big hit as there was no money coming in from sources such as ticket sales, parking and game guarantees, and significant reductions in conference support and student fees (declined enrollment). T. Aurand asked what percentage of the total budget comes from student fees. L. DeRango responded that this year, approximately 37% came from student fees, however this is a higher percentage than average (numbers skewed due to COVID). She also remarked that other areas, such as University support and athletic fees, had higher percentages this year due to COVID. L. DeRango closed discussion on the NCAA Financial Report by remarking that the coach/staff salaries reported do not include benefits included at the state level and that they will be working on getting those numbers included for next fiscal year. G. Roby asked about Huskies Invest. L. DeRango commented that Huskies Invest was a huge help this year, and that many of the larger donations were directed specifically toward facilities improvements. S. Frazier added that there was a lot of interest by donors looking to sponsor some of these big projects (baseball and tennis). G. Roby asked if there might be revenue generating opportunities in some of these areas now. J. Cheney responded that they are looking at renting the baseball fields in the summer as well as creating memberships for the use of the upgraded tennis facility. M. Groza added that the NCAA Report is a part of public records, so anyone can check it out if they were interested to see how NIU compares to other MAC institutions.

- b. **2021 Cure Bowl – Financial Report** – L. DeRango went over the Cure Bowl financial report (available in the Athletic Board Teams folder). NIU received a conference distribution of \$350,000, and projected an internal budget of around \$150,000, for a total budget of approximately \$500,000 in expenses. Total expenses ended up being around \$410,000, so they were a little under budget. M. Groza asked if all expenses had been tallied in the current report, and if the total out of pocket costs for traveling to the bowl game were around \$90,000, to which L. DeRango responded yes to both questions. M. Groza noted that in December there was

a question on whether a bowl game was profitable, and the answer was, unless it was one of the bigger bowls, these are more of a break-even enterprise, but provide a great marketing opportunity for the university.

- c. **Volleyball and Football Ticket Prices (Fall 2022)** – J. Cheney indicated that they are still working on finalizing the volleyball and football ticket prices for fall 2022 and will send them out to the Board as soon as they are completed. Football will be hosting six home games in DeKalb this fall (2 non-conference/4 conference). There will be a general increase in price by about \$12-\$15, and then another \$25 to accommodate the extra game. Finalized prices, schedules, and renewals will all be coming out shortly.

A significant change will be coming to the Huskie Athletic Fund this fall. Due to changes in tax laws, HAF members will no longer be able to count their seat license toward their HAF benefits. For instance, if a \$1,000 level donor used their \$300 season ticket purchase in the past to make it to the \$1,000 donor level, they would now register at the \$700 level.

There will be no changes in pricing for volleyball season tickets, however they may add a premium courtside seating option.

- VII. **Announcements/Adjournment** – M. Groza wrapped up the meeting with an announcement about the “MVP (Most Valuable Professor)” program. Student-athletes nominate a professor, faculty or staff member who are then honored at various sports events. M. Groza is working with Randi Napientek and Debra Boughton to enhance this program in an effort to further engage and encourage faculty and staff involvement. Marcella and Tim, current members of the Athletic Board, are recent winners of the MVP recognition and will be honored at an upcoming basketball game. M. Groza closed the meeting with a note that the next and final meeting of this fiscal year will be April 20, 2022.

P. Garrity made a motion to adjourn the meeting; G. Roby seconded; meeting closed at 3:26 pm.

Minutes Approved by Board: April 20, 2022