



ATHLETIC BOARD MEETING

April 20, 2022 – 2:00 pm

Present: Mark Groza (Chair), Tim Aurand, Aaron Fogleman, Sean Frazier, Pete Garrity, Kari Hickey, Marcella Otto, Jerri Reynolds, Lara Sala

Guests: Debra Boughton, Sr. Assoc. AD/Finance & Operations/SWA; John Cheney, Deputy AD/Executive Assoc. AD for Operations; Lisa DeRango, Sr. Assoc. AD/Human Resources & Administration; TJ Feuerbach, Sr. Assoc. AD/Development & Revenue Generation; Matt Varnadoe, Assistant AD/Compliance; Courtney Vinson, Sr. Assoc. AD/Sports Administration

- I. **Call to Order** – M. Groza called the meeting to order at 2:02 pm.
- II. **Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes** – P. Garrity moved to approve; A. Fogleman seconded; motion carried unanimously.
- III. **Athletics Director Update** – S. Frazier provided a brief overview of the current events in Athletics (document in Teams folder). He began with an introduction of the new Head Coach for Women's Soccer, Michael O'Neill, who comes to NIU from Saginaw Valley State. Another new hire is Nate Olson, the new Associate Athletic Director of Development/Huskie Athletic Fund. S. Frazier discussed the current spring sports, noting that the weather has created a lot of issues. Women's Tennis is doing well, currently sitting at the most wins in a season in the last 25 years. Football just hosted their Spring showcase, bringing alumni back Friday night, followed by a successful Easter event and open practice on Saturday.

Other noteworthy updates:

- HAF membership guides have been sent out.
- A new Frazier's Corner will be released today.
- The Football season ticket renewal deadline is June 1, 2022; HAF renewal deadline is June 30, 2022.
- NIU MAC Championships rings and pendants are available for fans to purchase as a way to commemorate the banner season. Proceeds will go toward the 1899 Club.
- The annual Victor E. Bash, a premier Athletics' fundraiser, will commence June 6-10th and will be virtual again this year. In conjunction with the Bash, Athletics will also be hosting the Huskie Summer Circuit with stops in Rockford and St. Charles.
- NIU is also hosting the Men's Golf MAC Championships at the White Eagle Golf Club in Naperville, April 29-May 1, 2022.

- IV. **Liaison Reports:**
 - a. **Diversity Integration Group (D.I.G.)** – Glen Roby/C. Vinson – C. Vinson noted that they are currently working on their annual survey. Members of the group will also be presenting and moderating at several conferences over the next few months, including the NACDA Convention and NCAA Spring Symposium.
 - b. **Finance and Facilities** – K. Hickey/J. Cheney/L. DeRango – J. Cheney indicated that the group is scheduled to meet tomorrow but plan to discuss transportation issues and end-of-year wrap-up. M. Groza asked about the progress of the new tennis facility, to which J. Cheney responded that Phase 1 of the Chessick Practice Center tennis facility upgrades have been completed. Upcoming

projects (pending BOT approval) will be the baseball turf, soccer field surface replacement, and 1899 Club.

- c. **External Affairs** – T. Aurand/R. Sedevie/ TJ Feuerbach – The External Affairs group met on March 15th. They discussed ticket/HAF renewals, the Football Spring Showcase, Victor E. Bash, Coach Hammock alumni event (May 12th) at the College Football Hall of Fame in Atlanta, Alumni Golf Outing at Cantigny (May 23rd), Homecoming, and upcoming Community outreach events (graduations on campus, community expos and the downtown branding initiatives).

V. **Athletic Department Reports:**

- a. **Title IX Overview & Prior Year Report on Title IX Compliance** – D. Boughton provided an overview on Title IX (PowerPoint in Teams folder), which is the Education Amendments of 1972 that prohibits sex discrimination in education programs – including athletics programs – that receive federal funds. The year marks the 50th anniversary of Title IX. Title IX is a federal law, but is also influenced by the NCAA. There are certain rules an institution has to follow in order to qualify as FBS eligible (slide 4): sport program offerings (NIU currently has 17 sports, 10 female/7male) and financial aid requirements. In order to retain DI status, the NCAA requires institutions to offer 50% of maximum allowable grants in each sport, have a certain amount of financial aid for student-athletes among programs offered, and have to provide at least 50 full grants in aid (25 must be female sports). D. Boughton noted that NIU is way above this number. In addition to the requirements for DI status, in order to meet FBS requirements, an institution must provide 90% of their maximum football grant in aid during a rolling two-year period and have to annually offer a minimum of 200 athletics grants in aid or spend \$4 million on athletics grants in aid (see slide 7 for scholarship breakdown). D. Boughton added that while NIU Athletics fully funds the allowable scholarships, they have had to pull back on Cost of Attendance due to budgetary constraints. Cost of Attendance (COA) is not mandatory aid, but NIU Athletics has supported in the past to assist student-athletes with bridging the gap between tuition fees, room and board, and books. This year, they supported ½ COA for 100 male and 100 female student athletes. S. Frazier added that NIU Athletics has strived to fundraise specifically for COA (i.e. Victor E. Bash), but with the financial burdens, they were forced to lessen what they could give.

There are three (3) tests used to ensure compliance with Title IX:

1. Accommodation of Interests and Abilities – three (3) ways to test:
 - a. Test One – Proportionality
 - i. Participation rates proportionate to undergraduate attendance (male/female)
 1. Who counts? Managing rosters/roster goals were essential when trying to meet the proportionality test. D. Boughton noted that while this might not be as important now, she felt it was still good to have roster goals to effectively support the sport program staffing needs.
 - b. Test Two – Continued Program Expansion for Underrepresented Sex
 - c. Test Three – Fully and Effectively Accommodate the Underrepresented Sex (survey)
 - i. Survey student population to ensure that the 17 sport programs we currently offer meet the interests and abilities of our current and admitted students.

2. Athletic Financial Aid – Athletics Financial Awards must be awarded proportionally (within 1%) to unduplicated participation rates (1 person aid – 1 time). Slide 17 of the PowerPoint provided NIU Athletics' Financial Aid breakdown for 2021. D. Boughton added that they are exactly where they need to be on the financial aid side.
3. Other Athletic Benefits and Opportunities – this test hosts a laundry list of items. D. Boughton indicated that the Athletics' Sr. Staff met last week to reaffirm the standard on these items to ensure they are all reviewing on the same level.

NIU Athletics has consistently been able to meet the first test, proportionality, for the past 10 years or so. This past year (2021), the undergraduate population at NIU hit 45% male / 55% female, while Athletics reported 53% male athletes / 46% female athletes, so they no longer meet the proportionality test. Thus, they will be shifting their focus to test three, effectively accommodating the underrepresented sex (females for NIU Athletics). D. Boughton indicated that they are currently working with the OGC, Ethics and Compliance Office, Office of Admissions and the Office of Accreditation, Assessment and Evaluation on the development and distribution of a survey to measure the interests and abilities of students enrolled and admitted at NIU. Statistical results could lead to a review of the current sport offerings. D. Boughton concluded that they will continue to annually review exit surveys from student-athletes, to look at roster targets, review of current and future sport offerings, etc., to continue to comply with NCAA and federal requirements for Title IX.

A. Fogleman asked how Transgender athletes were counted. D. Boughton responded that NIU does not currently have any disclosed Trans student-athletes but assumed they would count toward their participating team. S. Frazier added that there is not a clear definition on this in the Athletic world to date, providing an example of a recent situation at the University of Pennsylvania. He remarked that he believes we will see a lot more change and advocacy to address these issues moving forward, but that the NCAA will need help and member institutions will have to step up with accommodations.

D. Boughton closed her presentation with a listing of upcoming events to honor the celebration of the 50th anniversary of Title IX (full listing available in PowerPoint).

- b. **End of Year Compliance Report** – M. Varnadoe went over a PowerPoint (available in Teams folder). Institutional control is key for the NCAA, and institutions are ultimately in control of athletic departments. M. Varnadoe indicated that this is where the Athletic Board comes into play. One main service of the Athletic Board is reviewing athletic financial aid cancellation/reduction hearings. Student-athletes sign one-year athletic aid agreements; 99% of the time, athletic aid agreements are renewed, however, if not renewed, there is an appeals process. The Athletic Board reviews the appeals and helps to determine whether or not the student-athlete should be granted aid. M. Varnadoe pointed out that there is an exception to this process; student-athletes from the 2020-2021 academic year granted an additional year of eligibility due to COVID. NIU Athletics is not required to provide aid to the student-athletes that were granted an additional year of eligibility, so those students would not be eligible for the appeals process. A. Fogleman asked how the financial aid component was handled for the COVID seniors. S. Frazier responded that coaches were asked to prioritize within their allotment of scholarships.

M. Varnadoe touched base on the following:

- *Violations* (examples listed in the PowerPoint) – NIU had no major violations, mostly just social media violations.
- *NCAA Waivers* – Waivers are submitted when we feel that we have an exception to a NCAA rule (examples listed in the PowerPoint).
- *NCAA Transfer Portal* – There were 77 student-athletes in the portal during the 2020-21 academic year (statistics available in the PowerPoint). A majority of these were from COVID. So far this year, 37 student-athletes have entered the portal. T. Aurund asked if student-athletes that enter the portal can come back. M. Varnadoe responded that they can, however they may not get their athletic aid back. S. Frazier expanded that he just had a conversation with the VP of the NCAA about his concerns regarding this process. Now that the portal has been running for a couple of years, we are starting to see data showing students entering the portal with aid and coming out with nothing, and some populations of student-athletes are having to drop out of school entirely without this support. M. Groza added that the statistics from 2021 showed approximately 12,500 Division I student-athletes entering the portal on aid – only 51% transferred are retained some form of aid, 10% transferred without aid, and nearly 39% are still sitting in the portal. S. Frazier noted that we socialize and educate NIU student-athletes on the possible loss of scholarship/aid when they enter the portal.
- *Name, Image & Likeness (NIL)* – NIU has 48 student-athletes with some sort of NIL deal (90 total deals – 40 strictly apparel/merch, 58 deals worth less than \$100). S. Frazier remarked on the Governor signing an addendum to the NIL law that will give institutions in Illinois the ability to be more involved in the NIL process.

- c. **HAF Revenue Generating Outcomes** – T. Feuerbach provided an overview of the HAF revenue charts (document available in the Teams folder). The charts are fairly self-explanatory, but numbers are currently tracking well for FY22. T. Feuerbach noted that they expect to see a sizeable boost with HAF and season ticket renewal mailings having just gone out. Huskies Invest brought in over \$1 million and over 500 gifts, and there was a large uptick in capital giving, with a good portion of donors looking to support capital advancement projects.
- d. **Ticketed Sports Attendance & Revenue Outcomes (2021-2022 AY)** – J. Cheney went over ticket sales/attendance for FY21 (document available in the Teams folder). Ticket sales stagnated last year and NIU Athletics was well under the revenue projections. The document provided in the Teams folder showed a breakdown of the four ticketed sports. J. Cheney noted that one positive they saw was the usage of tickets, fans that bought tickets actually attended the sporting event).
- e. **Men and Women’s Basketball Ticket Prices (2022-2023 AY)** – J. Cheney indicated that prices for Men and Women’s Basketball tickets will not change, and that the number of games will be roughly the same as usual (document available in Teams folder).

VI. **Announcements/Adjournment** – M. Groza thanked the board for their service this year, noting that the meeting structure will remain the same moving into FY23.

P. Garrity made a motion to adjourn the meeting; T. Aurand seconded; meeting closed at 3:40 pm.