



**ATHLETIC BOARD MEETING (Convocation Center – Multipurpose Room)**  
**September 15, 2021 – 2:00 pm**

Present: Mark Groza (Chair), Tim Aurand, Sarah Cain, Aaron Fogleman, Pete Garrity, Kari Hickey, Parker Jeppson, Marcella Otto, Glenn Roby, Amberly Rodriguez, Lara Sala, Sean Frazier

Guests: Debra Boughton, Sr. Assoc. AD/Chief of Staff/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; Jamie Moreno, Cross Country Head Coach; 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 2:05 pm.
- II. **Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes** – P. Garrity moved to approve; K. Hickey seconded; motion carried unanimously.
- III. **Faculty Athletics Representative**
  - a. **Athletic Board Introductions and Overview** – M. Groza introduced himself as the Faculty Athletic Representative and Chair of the Athletic Board. The Athletic Board is a standing committee of the University Council, made up of different members and colleges across campus, and essentially serves as an oversight committee for athletics. The Board’s updated policies and procedures (as of August 2021) are available in the Teams folder for review. There are three Working Groups in the Athletics’ Department (D.I.G., Finance and Facilities, and External Affairs), with a Board liaison in each that serves as a go-between. The Athletic Board liaisons this year are as follows: Glenn Roby, D.I.G.; Kari Hickey, Finance and Facilities; Tim Aurand, External Affairs. These groups meet periodically throughout the year and report back to the Board.

*Introductions:*

- i. Mark Groza – Associate Professor of Marketing, College of Business, Faculty Athletic Representative, and Chair of the Athletic Board (5<sup>th</sup> year serving)
- ii. Courtney Vinson – Sr. Associate AD/Sports Administration, oversees Men’s Basketball, Women’s Soccer and Wrestling
- iii. John Cheney – Executive Associate Athletic Director, oversees Football, Baseball, Gymnastics, ticket office, sports medicine, facilities and events
- iv. Pete Garrity – NIU Alum (’71 Marketing; ’76 MBA); now serving on the Alumni and Foundation Boards; has represented the Alumni Association on the Athletic Board for the past six years
- v. TJ Feuerbach – Sr. Associate AD, oversees Huskie Athletic Fund, Men’s Soccer, Men and Women’s Tennis, and sports performance
- vi. Kari Hickey – Director of the Undergraduate Nursing Program; Faculty representative from the College of Health and Human Sciences
- vii. Sarah Cain – Oversees Rare Books and Special Collections library; Faculty representative for the University Libraries
- viii. Debra Boughton – Sr. Associate AD/SWA, oversees Women’s Basketball and Softball, and revenue generation

- ix. Amberly Rodriguez – Student-Athlete on the NIU Softball team; Representative on the MAC COSA (Council of Student-Athletes)
- x. Parker Jeppson – Student-Athlete on the NIU Men’s Soccer team; Representative on the MAC COSA (Council of Student-Athletes)
- xi. Marcella Otto – 2<sup>nd</sup> year Faculty member in the Kinesiology and Physical Education department (Sport Management)
- xii. Anton Goff – Sr. Associate AD, oversees student-athlete support services, Recreation, Volleyball, Women’s Indoor/Outdoor Track & Field, and Cross Country
- xiii. Glenn Roby – Alumnus and volunteer to the University in various capacities; HAF representative
- xiv. Ryan Sedevie – Sr. Associate AD, oversees Men and Women’s Golf, athletic marketing, athletic communications, corporate sponsorships, trademark licensing and equipment room
- xv. Sean Frazier – Athletic Director
- xvi. Lisa DeRango – Sr. Associate AD, oversees HR and Finance Administration
- xvii. Lara Sala – Represents the General Counsel’s office
- xviii. Tim Aurand – Represents the Marketing Department
- xix. Aaron Fogleman – Represents the History Department

b. **Name, Image & Likeness (NIL)** – On July 1, 2021, several states, including Illinois, enacted or passed laws to allow student-athletes to profit off of their name, image and likeness. Student-athletes at NIU can now earn money off their NIL (can be sponsored, do social media posts, camps, etc.). M. Groza noted that per Illinois state law, student-athletes are required to report their NIL activities. He recently looked at this report and there were less than 15 names on the list of student-athletes that have already secured deals. As time passes, M. Groza indicated that we will likely present a formal report of the NIU NIL activities at future Board meetings. C. Vinson added that they went through an education process with student-athletes, informing them of what they can and cannot do. One of the things they recognized quickly is that some student-athletes were looking for athletics’ staff to review their deals before making commitments. Based on state laws this is impermissible, however student-athletes can be referred to the NIU Student Legal Counsel to review their contracts (unable to negotiate or contract deals, just strictly review). M. Groza noted that NIU has also partnered with Compass to provide some of the educational materials and recording requirements. A. Fogleman asked if this will end up being good or bad for student-athletes. C. Vinson responded that it will likely be great for student-athletes, just difficult for athletics’ staff to monitor. M. Groza noted that it is a little early to see the ramifications on how NIL will affect our institution but remarked that it is great that it gives our student-athletes entrepreneurial opportunities.

c. **NCAA Constitutional Convention, Conference Realignment, Alston Case/Educational Benefits** – M. Groza discussed the NCAA’s current Constitutional Convention review process. The NCAA has been a target of political and legal pressure recently, a lot of this stemming from the Alston Case where the Supreme Court ruled against the NCAA’s prohibition against offering educational inducements/monies. This pointed out the need for major changes within the NCAA. At the same time, there is a lot of pressure coming from the Autonomous 5 conferences. With the hurricane of activity in the NCAA governance, what things will look like for conferences, the power of conferences, conference realignment, etc. is up in the air. There has already been some significant shuffling with the SEC adding Oklahoma and Texas, as well as the Big 12 adding Cincinnati, Central Florida, BYU, Houston, etc. The NCAA plans to host an initial constitutional

convention in November with the intention of coming away with a concrete plan for the future (i.e. division structure, FBS/FCS, etc.) by January. M. Groza noted that this will be a tough process with many changes on the horizon, and how this will affect NIU, the MAC, and FBS football has yet to be determined.

- d. **Proposed change to AB Policy on Finals Week Scheduling** – M. Groza brought to the Board’s attention a topic that seems to recur annually. In 2008, the Athletic Board passed a policy for finals week scheduling (*\*see below under “Existing Policy” – full policy can be found in the handbook and bylaws*).

**\*Existing Policy**

*In particular, the athletic department must adhere to the following policy regarding finals week competition: No athletic contests may be scheduled beginning one (1) day prior to the onset of finals week and ending with the last scheduled finals unless it is a competition due to or resulting from conference affiliation, NCAA tournament, or a bowl game. Athletic contests scheduled two (2) days prior to finals week must be held on NIU’s campus. Student-athletes are not permitted to travel for an athletic contest until they have completed their final exams. (Approved 3/19/08).*

The caveat in the current policy is that athletics’ contests scheduled two days (Saturday) prior to finals week must be held on NIU’s campus (only relates to non-conference games). Athletics has requested waivers of this rule in the past to allow an away contest the Saturday before finals. M. Groza noted that there has not been much controversy in these decisions previously and asked the Board to reconsider the part that he crossed out (*\*\*see below in “Proposed Change to Policy”*). This would allow scheduling of away contests the Saturday before finals week but still keep true to the no contests, home or away, the Sunday preceding finals through the last scheduled final.

**\*\*Proposed Change to Policy**

*In particular, the athletic department must adhere to the following policy regarding finals week competition: No athletic contests may be scheduled beginning one (1) day prior to the onset of finals week and ending with the last scheduled finals unless it is a competition due to or resulting from conference affiliation, NCAA tournament, or a bowl game. ~~Athletic contests scheduled two (2) days prior to finals week must be held on NIU’s campus.~~ Student-athletes are not permitted to travel for an athletic contest until they have completed their final exams.*

M. Groza expanded that this essentially only applies to Men and Women’s Basketball and that he had spoken to Student-Athlete Advisory Committee (SAAC) representatives from those teams about the proposed change. He indicated that the SAAC representatives supported the change. The Board was then asked their thoughts on the proposed removal of “Athletic contests scheduled two (2) days prior to finals week must be held on NIU’s campus”. P. Garrity indicated that when these opportunities/exceptions have come up previously, it has not appeared to adversely affect the student-athletes. K. Hickey expressed concern about overnight trips, asking what the plan would be if the Saturday contest is further away, barring the student-athlete’s ability to return prior to Sunday. C. Vinson responded that for Men’s Basketball they have typically arranged these contests to be day trips only, but if the contest was further out, they would bring a representative from academic support with them. D. Boughton added that the

travel situation was the real concern in the past, which is why it was stipulated that the contest needed to be a home game. She felt that athletics and coaches should have some structure to ensure accountability, like requiring an academic support person to travel with the team. She suggested adding a line to the effect of, “regional travel only” or “take academic personnel”. This pertinent addition would then remove the need to include the Board on these decisions. A. Fogleman asked what concerns led to the policy in the first place. D. Boughton responded that a lot of it had to do with academics when the Men’s Basketball program required additional structure. At the time of the policy inception, student-athletes were receptive to the inclusion of these stipulations and seemed to want to keep them in place whenever the topic was revisited. M. Otto added that as a former student-athlete she could never study on the bus. She felt that keeping the policy as is might be beneficial to student-athletes by at least removing the travel component. A. Rodriguez provided insight as a current student-athlete who has experience with MAC competition occurring either just before or during finals week for the last two years. She noted that everyone on her team has been able to adjust and that her coaches do a lot of preemptive work with professors and SAASS to prepare them for their finals. She felt that it is personally doable but included that it might vary based on the academic program or individual needs. M. Groza asked the group if they would be comfortable adding in a phrase about having to return to campus by Saturday. C. Vinson responded that adding that particular wording would just bring them back to square one with needing Board approval as the reality is that some contests might not allow for the team to return that night depending on location and game times, which are determined by the conference and not by the institution. K. Hickey suggested adding a line regarding inclusion of academic support. M Groza proposed the following:

**\*\*Amended Proposed Change**

*In particular, the athletic department must adhere to the following policy regarding finals week competition: No athletic contests may be scheduled beginning one (1) day prior to the onset of finals week and ending with the last scheduled finals unless it is a competition due to or resulting from conference affiliation, NCAA tournament, or a bowl game. If an athletic contest is scheduled two (2) days prior to finals week and held away from NIU’s campus, the travel party must be accompanied by a member of NIU’s Student-Athlete Academic Support Services (SAASS). Student-athletes are not permitted to travel for an athletic contest until they have completed their final exams.*

P. Garrity made a motion to approve the policy and changes as proposed with the addition of the inclusion of adding appropriate academic support during team travel. K. Hickey seconded. M. Groza called a vote by show of hands (voting members include M. Groza, T. Aurund, M. Otto, K. Hickey, A. Fogleman, S. Cain, P. Jeppson, A. Rodriguez and P. Garrity). Nine (9) in favor, none opposed. Motion carried.

- IV. **Athletics Director Update** – S. Frazier provided a quick update on current events in Athletics (review document available in the Athletic Board Teams folder). Football has started off well with a big win at Georgia Tech. The first home game exposed a lot of issues in the customer service areas (concessions and operations). S. Frazier issued a statement on Sunday apologizing to patrons for the lack of service and noted that the athletics’ Sr. Staff will be working on cleaning up processes for the next home game. Overall, all the fall sports are doing well, particularly the Men’s Soccer and Volleyball team. S. Frazier also remarked on other upcoming events. The annual Huskies Invest fundraiser will be held virtually October 25<sup>th</sup> through October

29<sup>th</sup>. The NIU Convocation Center will also be hosting a Chris Young concert in November. Approximately 1,200-1,300 tickets have been sold. Finally, S. Frazier commented that he has had several conversations with the city (Police Chief Byrd and Interim Police Chief Mitchell) regarding some of the lawlessness that has been occurring recently in DeKalb. Athletics had both Police Chiefs at their most recent Town Hall to discuss the safety concerns around the Annie Glidden corridor. He felt that it was enlightening and refreshing to have both the DeKalb and NIU police working together and noted that it was the first time he has felt that both NIU and the city are doing what they can to ensure everyone's safety. G. Roby added that he attended the Annie Glidden North Community Meeting and that he is a part of the group "Opportunity DeKalb" and has also seen and heard positive things so far.

A. Goff introduced Jamie Moreno, the new Head Coach for Cross Country/Assistant Coach for Indoor/Outdoor Track & Field. Jamie comes to NIU from Drury, where he had a very successful career. J. Moreno gave a quick recap of his previous coaching experience and noted how excited he is to be a part of NIU. He hopes to continue to build on the success that Coach Myers brought to the program. Having lost a few key runners, Coach Moreno plans to focus hard on recruiting.

V. **Liaison Reports:**

- a. **Diversity Integration Group (D.I.G.)** – Glen Roby /C. Vinson – C. Vinson indicated that they just had their first meeting. They worked on an updated plan (now going through the approval process with Sean) and discussed creating subcommittees. M. Groza asked about program initiatives surrounding diversity through the MAC. C. Vinson responded that the MAC has a Mental Health program in October, and the Diversity and Inclusion program is in February.
- b. **Finance and Facilities** – K. Hickey /J. Cheney/ L. DeRango – L. DeRango remarked that their group just finalized their membership and are up to 29 members. They have decided to move to quarterly meetings with their first meeting on October 21<sup>st</sup>.
- c. **External Affairs** – T. Aurand/R. Sedevie/ TJ Feuerbach – T. Feuerbach noted that the External Affairs working group has not had an opportunity to meet yet but will likely get together prior to homecoming and then monthly after that.

VI. **Athletic Department Reports:**

- a. **SAASS Academic Report (prior year)** – A. Goff gave a quick overview of the SAASS Academic Report (available in the Athletic Board Teams folder). Highlights included:
  - a. Fall 2020 GPA - 3.369 / Spring 2021 - GPA 3.272 / Cumulative GPA at the end of Spring 2021 - 3.352
  - b. Gymnastics had the highest cumulative GPA for female sport at 3.842 (ranked #1 in the Nation) / Men's Tennis had the highest cumulative GPA for male sport at 3.712
  - c. 15 out of 16 teams had a cumulative GPA of 3.0 or higher
    - i. 307 student-athletes ended fall 2020 with a GPA of 3.0 or higher / 293 student-athletes ended spring 2021 with a GPA of 3.0 or higher (U's were allowed in the fall)
  - d. NCAA graduation rate data shows that NIU student-athletes continue to outperform NIU campus (metrics) – NIU student-athlete GSR 87%Student-athletes were able to continue to do community service projects during COVID; Projects included: reading to elementary students via Zoom, Soul for Soles (helping females

in 3<sup>rd</sup> world countries start businesses), sending cards to elderly in long-term care facilities, collecting pop-tops for the Ronald McDonald house, etc. A. Goff also discussed a new app that the student-athletes are using called Game Plan. They can load different application workshops for student-athletes to access at any time with topics such as financial education, sports wagering, mental health, sexual violence, personal/professional development, etc. NIU ended up becoming the #1 user of this app. Upcoming events: Mental Health Awareness week (October 12-16); Diversity & Inclusion Social Media Campaign (October 27-29); Diversity & Inclusion week (February 15-19). Lastly, A. Goff noted that they recently launched a student-athlete mentor program which pairs former student-athletes with current student-athletes.

A. Fogleman asked about the student-athletes who did not do well academically. A. Goff responded that they have a very small percentage of student-athletes that struggle, but there are measures in place to aid these students including early intervention programs. A. Fogleman wanted to know approximately how many student-athletes had less than a 2.0 GPA. A. Goff answered that only one (1) student-athlete ended this past semester below a 2.0. S. Frazier added that these numbers really prove the commitment of the student-athletes and staff to succeed in competition and in the classroom. P. Garrity asked how NIU's student-athletes compared to the rest of the MAC. A. Goff answered that NIU was top 3 in the MAC and that 3 of our program's APRs were recognized in the top 10% of all programs nationally with Gymnastics ranking #1 in the nation.

- b. **FY22 Budget Update** – L. DeRango gave a brief overview of the FY21 numbers (PowerPoint available in the Athletic Board Teams folder). The worksheets that were submitted to campus last year for FY21 had anticipated a 50% fan capacity, which put NIU Athletics at a predicted \$1.8 million deficit. The actuality was that no fans were allowed due to COVID, so the predicted deficit jumped to \$5 million. L. DeRango noted that while campus is still closing out FY21, their internal reconciliations show the actual deficit is closer to \$3.4 million. This number came largely from having no fans in the stands, other hits to revenue areas, and added COVID expenses. At the same time, there were some successes that cushioned the blow including the implementation of reductions for all units and increases in other revenue streams coming in higher than expected (conference, student fees, and fundraising). L. DeRango pointed out the FY22 estimated sources and uses of revenue, noting that the athletic fee is the highest source of revenue and salaries are the highest source of expenses. In the bottom-line summary, NIU Athletics is looking at an approximate \$2.6 million deficit in FY22. L. DeRango mentioned that they are working on a 3-year “dig-out” plan, which is currently in draft form and being tailored, along with several discussions with campus. Ways in which the department will look for further cost savings: continued cost center reductions across the board (this past year was a 15% cut off the baseline), revision of team travel policy, and increase in fundraising efforts. A. Fogleman asked about the tuition waivers being a revenue source. L. DeRango responded that we count that as money coming in but that we do not actually pay these out. D. Boughton added that the IDHE approves certain allocations of tuition waivers, specifically for gender equity purposes in athletics, on top of the waivers the University supplies. These are coordinated through the Financial Aid office and governed by the IDHE with a lot of regulations and restrictions on how the waivers can be used. M. Groza noted that these are more accounting-reported and not an actual exchange of money, essentially a forgiveness of tuition. From an accounting perspective, they are counted as a revenue and expense, but are not really an outlay of money. T. Aurand commented on the

athletic fees, which represent a large portion of athletics' revenue and asked if there was any push back from students or parents since there were no events for students to attend during COVID. S. Frazier responded that athletics is only one side of the portfolio, remarking on the many campus collaborations/partnerships that a student would benefit from that are beyond attending games (virtual programming, educational opportunities, etc.). T. Aurand returned that many students and parents might not know this information and, in his opinion, might be unhappy with being charged the athletic fee if there are no athletic events to attend. He suggested better communication on what the student fee represents. S. Frazier will provide the detailed document depicting the connections of athletics beyond sport attendance, which was released previously on Frazier's Corner, to the Board post meeting.

- c. **Facilities Improvements (prior year) and FY plan** - J. Cheney provided an overview of the facilities improvements from last fiscal year and the plan for FY22 (document available in the Athletic Board Teams folder). Some of the current, in-progress, and future projects include: replacement of the Softball batting cages and first-base bullpen, expanding Baseball batting cages and bullpen area, turf replacement for Softball and Baseball, LED lighting in the Convocation Center arena and gym (delayed due to delivery lead time), addition of a weight room to the Convocation Center, addition of another court to the Tennis courts, locker room renovations, Yordon Center Training Table (in conceptual/fundraising phase but will essentially be a cafeteria/dining space for student-athletes), Baseball renaming park after Coach Owens, Softball dugout/locker room renovation request, normal wear upgrades in Yordon Center, Recreation Men and Women's locker room upgrade (previously approved by BOT but froze due to COVID), etc. J. Cheney added that they are looking into community partnerships as well as campus partnerships with the Rec, the community and with athletics to find ways to maximize the outdoor sports complex of the Rec Center. G Roby asked what the Chick Evans Fieldhouse was being used for. J. Cheney answered that there are three (3) tennis courts, two (2) indoor soccer/roller hockey courts, ROTC, campus recreation multi-use spaces, etc. that are being utilized periodically in the facility. He noted that the tennis program uses the indoor space for practice, but that it is not suitable for a tournament as they would need four (4) courts. M. Groza wrapped up the section by noting that one of the main reasons the Athletic Board is given this report is to not only see what is going on but also to ensure that there is equity amongst the different programs.
- d. **Complimentary Ticket Policy** - J. Cheney made a quick note on the Complimentary Ticket Policy (document available in the Athletic Board Teams folder). The policy has not changed in the past 2-3 years and shows the different groups that receive complimentary tickets, whether it be part of their contract or based on department responsibilities. These impact revenue to some extent but have more intrinsic value to distribute internally or to the community. M. Groza reminded the group that as Athletic Board members, they can receive two (2) complimentary tickets per ticketed sport. Additional details on how to claim complimentary tickets will be sent the week leading up to the game.

VII. **Announcements/Adjournment** – M. Groza closed the meeting by thanking the members of the Board and noted that the next meeting will be December 1<sup>st</sup> in the Multi-Purpose room unless something drastically changes.

K. Hickey made a motion to adjourn the meeting; P. Garrity seconded; meeting closed at 3:45 pm.

**Minutes Approved by Board: December 1, 2021**