



**ATHLETIC BOARD MEETING**  
**December 1, 2021 – 2:00 pm**

Present: Mark Groza (Chair), Tim Aurand, Aaron Fogleman, Pete Garrity, Lesley Gilbert, Michele Hunt, Parker Jeppson, Marcella Otto, Jerri Reynolds, Amberly Rodriguez, 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** – T. Aurand moved to approve; P. Garrity seconded; motion carried unanimously.
- III. **Faculty Athletics Representative** – M. Groza introduced the group to a few new faces: Jerri Reynolds is on the SPS Council and works in the School of Nursing. Michele Hunt is substituting for Sara Cain and is with Acquisitions in the University Libraries. M. Groza then touched base on updates regarding the NCAA reshuffle. The greater NCAA has come up with some concepts and have now moved on to the division level (NIU is Division I). M. Groza noted that there will be a convention in January to continue discussions but did not have a lot of substantive updates to provide the group at this time.

M. Groza also brought up the topic of Conference expansion. The MAC did a thorough look into a few different options in terms of expansion and a decision was made to stay put for the time being. A. Fogelman asked if the MAC conference alignment varies by sport like the Big 12. M. Groza responded that the MAC does have some affiliate members in addition to their twelve “full-time members”.

- a. **APR Report** – The Academic Progress Report (APR) can be found in the Athletic Board Teams folder. These numbers will not be released publicly this year. The report consists of a rolling average over the course of four years. The magic number for APR is 930; if a program falls below this, there could be sanctions or post-season bans. All of NIU’s programs are above 930. Two components make up the APR, eligibility and retention. A. Goff added that they had several programs with 1000% APR that received national recognition. T. Aurand noticed that the men’s basketball team’s retention numbers were below 930 and wondered what the consequences would be. M. Groza responded that there are two parts of this calculation, the individual year vs. the multi-year average. If a team falls below one year, so long as the four-year average is above 930, they would still be ok. T. Aurand asked what types of consequences there were for falling below 930. C. Vinson answered that nothing would happen this year as the NCAA has suspended APR during the COVID year, but typical consequences range from adjusted CARA schedules (i.e. 20 hours to 16 hours) up to reduction or inability to participate in post-season, including the MAC tournament. She mentioned that the men’s basketball program this year saw a significant dip specifically related to the coaching change, noting that it is normal to see student-athletes transfer out when there are coaching changes. Additionally, of the transfers, there were a few that had GPA’s under 2.5, which also impacted the retention calculations. T. Aurand asked if falling below the 930 mark for several years in a row would affect scholarships.

C. Vinson answered yes, however this would be a severe punishment, likely resulting from many years of falling below 930 without any signs of improvement.

- b. **GSR Report** – M. Groza indicated that the GSR (Graduation Success Rate) numbers will be released tomorrow (document available in the Athletic Board Teams folder). Several teams achieved 100% GSR. M. Groza noted that the federal graduation rate does not account for transfers while the GSR gives credit for student-athletes who are in good academic standing that transfer to another institution. He also shared another document (also available in the Athletic Board Teams folder) that illustrates NIU student-athletes' graduate success rates compared to that of the general student body at NIU. Based on the numbers, student-athletes have a much higher GSR (69%) than the regular student body (48%). A. Fogleman asked how NIU compares to other institutions in Illinois. M. Groza responded that NIU's numbers are comparable to other institutions in the MAC conference, but was not sure how they compared to the state of Illinois.

- IV. **Athletics Director Update** – S. Frazier provided an update on current events in Athletics (document available in the Athletic Board Teams folder). A number of fall sports are doing incredibly well. S. Frazier remarked on the men's soccer team, noting the efforts of Coach Swan and his turn around of the program. The team earned several awards including MAC Coach of the Year (Swan), MAC Player of the Year (Markanich), MAC West Division Champions and MAC Champions, and are consistently achieving excellence academically and in the community. They are now in the second round of the NCAA Tournament. Football is also doing great, earning conference accolades of Coach of the Year (Hammock), Freshman of the Year (Ducker), MAC West Division Champions, and making a run at the title of MAC Champions this weekend. With fall sports wrapping up, Athletics is switching gears to winter sports. Men's basketball is working through the growing pains of having a new coaching staff. They opened with a bang on the road against Washington and hit a few bumps since then. Their first home game is tonight at 7pm. Women's basketball is coming back with approximately 97% of their former roster. They took a hard loss at Harvard but showed a lot of energy and will hopefully bounce back at the upcoming Compass Challenge. S. Frazier shared that the women's soccer head coach, Julie Colhoff, was a non-renewal. While the team was holding up academically, they were not translating in competition. C. Vinson will be heading the search for her replacement. S. Frazier also mentioned the success of Huskies Invest, an Athletics' week-long fundraiser. Since its inception in 2017, Huskies Invest has continued to grow. This year they raised over \$1 million, and several of the donations came in the form of much needed support of facility upgrades.

T. Aurund asked if there were any bowl tie-ins to the MAC Championship. S. Frazier explained that ESPN will have first pick, then the Arizona Bowl, and so on from there. Seven teams in the league are bowl eligible this year, but being in the MAC Championship, especially if NIU wins, will likely get them a good bowl game. A. Fogelman asked about the school getting compensation for attending a bowl game. S. Frazier remarked that while some bigger bowls such as the Orange Bowl or the "New Year's Eve" bowls might bring in money to the institutions playing in them, the smaller bowls do not usually equate to more than covering the operational costs of attending the bowl.

P. Garrity asked how the IHSA Football Championships went, noting that everything looked good from a spectator standpoint. S. Frazier responded that it was all-hands-on deck to staff the event, but that everything went well considering. He remarked that the agreement with IHSA began as more of a venture between DeKalb and NIU, bringing thousands of people to the area,

and while they will be putting in a bid to be the host school for IHSA at the end of the current contract, he indicated that he would like to see more shared responsibility with the city. J. Cheney added that while the exposure of hosting the championships is great, staffing logistics are challenging particularly since the event occurs just after Thanksgiving. Over the course of two days, they saw over 25,000 attendees over the course of two days and over 1,000 participants across 16 teams. NIU is currently in year 5 of the 10-year contract (not including a 1-year extension due to the COVID year). The bid to host will be next spring (2022) and will be awarded at the championships next year.

P. Garrity asked if S. Frazier could elaborate on the MAC's position on expansion. S. Frazier responded that the discussions are being carried out mainly at the presidential level, but he personally feels there are some things that don't make sense about expanding the conference in the current landscape. The MAC's equity is pretty high right now, so if they were to look into expanding, those institutions would have to bring something to the table, whether it be academically, regionally, or athletically. S. Frazier noted that he is not opposed to expansion sometime in the future, but that it would be a gamble and the MAC would need to do their homework before extending any invitations. M. Groza added that, at the end of the day, the MAC needs to add to the collective value just like every other conference, and they just aren't there yet.

V. **Liaison Reports:**

- a. **Diversity Integration Group (D.I.G.)** – Glen Roby/C. Vinson – C. Vinson indicated that Athletics' staff recently completed CODE training through ADEI and that several teams were also able to complete the training. The group is currently working through a revamp of the D.I.G. survey.
- b. **Finance and Facilities** – K. Hickey/J. Cheney/L. DeRango – J. Cheney indicated that their group will be meeting quarterly and provided a quick update on the Finance and Facilities Working Group's last meeting (notes from the meeting available in the Athletic Board Teams folder). At the most recent meeting, L. DeRango shared the impact of COVID on athletics' budget. It was apparent that a lot of folks on campus are suffering from staffing shortages, and all are doing the best they can with the resources available, trying to find efficiencies and cost-saving. Their next meeting will be mid-January.

Other topics discussed included:

- Contracts/employment agreements (i.e. Hammock and Swan)
- IHSA
- Harlem Globetrotters coming to the Convocation Center on 1/13/22
- Transition to winter sports
- Pouring Rights – NIU will be staying with Pepsi (still waiting on final contracts). They were also able to isolate Isotonix products (i.e. Gatorade, BioSteel, etc.) in a separate sponsorship deal.

M. Groza asked J. Cheney to briefly talk about the tennis facility upgrades. J. Cheney noted that one of the projects during Huskies Invest that caught some interest was the tennis facility upgrade. The Chick Evans Field House, which currently only has three courts, requires the addition of a fourth court to be able to be utilized as a facility capable of hosting MAC competitions, thus eliminating the need for the NIU student-athletes to travel to Rockford,

where they currently play. The project is presently awaiting approval from the Foundation and will then go through the campus facilities approval process. J. Cheney hopes that they will be able to break ground on adding the fourth court sometime within the next few months.

- c. **External Affairs** – T. Aurand/R. Sedevie/ TJ Feuerbach – M. Groza tabled discussion from the External Affairs Working Group as many of the topics have been discussed already during today's meeting.

VI. **Athletic Department Reports:**

- a. **SAAC Initiatives** – M. Groza asked the representatives from SAAC (Student-Athlete Advisory Council) to talk a little bit about what their roles are. A. Rodriguez introduced herself as a representative of both SAAC and COSA (Council of Student-Athletes). COSA representatives from MAC institutions meet monthly and discuss several topics, including future initiatives. This year, they focused on body image, depression, and anxiety during mental health awareness week in October. They worked to create awareness through social media, did chalk writing outside of the Chessick (using the tag #selflove), and attended a workshop conducted by Cheyenne about body image issues. Their next focus will be on the MAC Mental Health Summit in Cleveland coming up in February. As the SAAC representatives, A. Rodriguez and P. Jeppson will attend in-person; they will bring back the information from the Summit to share with other student-athletes and look for ways to use this information to improve the student experience. P. Jeppson added that the MAC will also have programming for Diversity and Inclusion in the spring. The SAAC is also working on ideas for the student-athlete award's ceremony, The Victor's. L. Gilbert made a point to note how impressed she is by the hard work being done by the student-athletes to support these important initiatives.
- b. **MAC Championship/Bowl Game Preparations** – J. Cheney provided a quick run-down of the upcoming football preparations in relation to the MAC Championship and potential bowl games. First, the MAC Championships will be this Saturday, December 4<sup>th</sup>. The team will leave Friday morning and head straight to Ford Field for a walkthrough. Kickoff on Saturday will be 12pm. The choices for potential bowls will likely be determined by the outcome of the game (in addition to some other external factors). ESPN will have first pick, then the Arizona Bowl, and so on. J. Cheney indicated that the Bowl Steering Committee will be meeting back at the Convocation Center on Sunday afternoon and should know which bowl they will be attending by the evening (after the release of the "New Year's Six"). Of the games that NIU is bowl eligible for, the first game they could participate in would be on December 17<sup>th</sup>, and the last would be on January 31<sup>st</sup>. A. Fogleman asked what options seem best for NIU. J. Cheney responded that it would depend on a lot of factors, remarking that the coaching staff would like a later game so they have more time to rest and practice. He felt that something around December 23<sup>rd</sup> would be best from a timing/planning perspective but added that there aren't really any "bad" bowls to go to. M. Groza noted that from an expense standpoint, bowl games typically come out neutral financially, and that the Board would see the final numbers from the bowl revenue/expenses at a future meeting.

M. Groza asked P. Garrity to expand on some of the programming put on by the Foundation and Alumni Association surrounding the Championship and bowl game. P. Garrity stated that they have been busy planning. There is a holiday party occurring tonight in Chicago, then a donor dinner planned for Friday night in Detroit and a pre-game brunch just before the game on Saturday. As far as bowl game planning, most bowl games will have some type of package

available for attendees. P. Garrity indicated that once they know which bowl NIU is attending, the Foundation and Alumni Association will look at the different packages/options and determine what makes sense for NIU. Dana King will be the go-to person on this initiative this year.

- c. **Evaluation of Staff and Coaches** – L. DeRango provided a quick overview of the evaluation process used for staff and coaches in athletics (materials available in the Athletic Board Teams folder). She noted that while the main evaluation tool, the Qualtrics 360 Assessment, has been used for several years in its current format (modified briefly during COVID), they will be looking into updating beginning late January/early February of next year.

The evaluation tools noted in the PowerPoint are only used for SPS temporary employees (i.e. coaches, Sr. Administrators, etc.), not Civil Service. For coaches, the evaluation is made up of several different components: student-athlete program evaluations, student-athlete exit interview surveys (seniors only), a 360 NIU Athletics assessment, and a self-evaluation. Most evaluations are completed by June 30<sup>th</sup>, though they try to complete evaluations of coaches and coaching staff at the end of their season. The 360 Qualtrics Assessment is sent out to individuals with direct interaction with the person being evaluated (head coaches will send for their staff evaluations while sport administrators send these out for the head coach evaluations). The feedback from this anonymous assessment, which evaluates multiple areas (i.e. leadership, commitment, communication, academic/athletic successes (if applicable), conflict resolution, etc.), is collected and reviewed by the supervisor/head coach. The supervisor/head coach will then complete the hard master form to be reviewed with the employee. For head coaches and Sr. Administrator evaluations, the employee(s) will meet with Sean Frazier directly to go over the feedback. Once everyone has reviewed and signed off on the assessment form, the form is saved in the employee's file. HR does not get copies of these, rather they will receive the required one-page document that states that the review was conducted. L. DeRango indicated that they are looking to make the new evaluation tool more goal oriented and hope to launch in FY23.

- VII. **Announcements/Adjournment** – M. Groza closed the meeting with a note that the next meeting will be February 16, 2022.

T. Aurand made a motion to adjourn the meeting; L. Gilbert seconded; meeting closed at 3:13 pm.

**Minutes Approved by Board: February 16, 2022**