



ATHLETIC BOARD MEETING April 19, 2023 – 2:00 pm

Present: Courtney Hughes (Chair), Aaron Fogleman, Sean Frazier, Michele Hunt, Tom Libert, Brian McCormick, Marcella Otto, Glenn Roby, Laura Sala

Guests: John Cheney, Deputy AD/Executive Assoc. AD/Operations; TJ Feuerbach, Sr. Assoc. AD/Development & Revenue Generation; Anton Goff, Sr. Assoc. AD/Director of SAASS; Courtney Vinson, Sr. Assoc. AD/Sports Administration; Matt Varnadoe, Associate AD/Compliance

- I. **Call to Order** – C. Hughes called the meeting to order at 2:01pm; C. Hughes asked for a motion to approve the agenda. B. McCormick moved to approve; G. Roby seconded; motion carried unanimously.
- II. **Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes** – M. Otto moved to approve; G. Roby seconded; motion carried unanimously.
- III. **Faculty Athletics Representative** – C. Hughes briefly discussed a recent meeting with herself, Courtney Vinson, and the University Council. All reporting committees meet with the President and University Council annually to provide updates from the past year. During the updates for Athletic Board, C. Hughes noted a question was asked about what makes a student-athlete different than other students at NIU. C. Vinson discussed the schedule, travel, commitments, etc., but C. Hughes thought it interesting that not all faculty and staff know about the additional commitments for student-athletes and urged the group to continue to share the message. C. Hughes also discussed scholar athletes of the week. The Mid-American Conference releases a male and female scholar athlete of the week every week through the academic year. In review through March, NIU student-athletes have been selected six times, making them the top two amongst the 12 MAC schools.

C. Hughes wrapped up the Faculty Athletics report with a discussion on the NCAA Transformation Committee (PowerPoint available in Teams folder). There will be MAC meetings coming up at the end of May with one of the main topics of discussion being the Transformation Committee. This initiative, put forth by the NCAA, will focus on issues important to student-athletes and athletics departments. The whole process has brought forth an initial series of recommendations. These recommendations were just proposed a few months ago, so a lot of refinement will be happening over the next several months with conversations occurring at the institutional, conference and national levels. In the PowerPoint presentation, C. Hughes highlighted a few priority areas: elevating support for student-athlete mental, physical and academic well-being; enhancing the Division I championship experience for student-athletes; and building a faster, fairer and more equitable Division I with the focus on protecting student-athletes rather than punishing them. C. Hughes noted that the NCAA wanted the student-athletes to have a voice in the decisions that are being made about athletics in college, so a lot of the recommendations included adding representation of student-athletes on operational committees and even establishing sport specific advocacy groups. C. Hughes wrapped up the discussion by acknowledging that while these recommendations are still being revised, changes will be required by all institutions within the next year once passed.
- IV. **Athletics Director Update** – S. Frazier provided an update on spring happenings in Athletics (document in Teams folder). Athletics hired a new head cross country coach for, Juan Carrillo.

Juan was a former volunteer assistant at NIU with great recruiting ties in the area. A. Goff noted that Juan will serve as the head coach for the cross country program, and as assistant coach for track & field distances over 800m. S. Frazier resumed his update on spring sports, which are coming to a close. The baseball and softball programs are in full swing. Men and women's tennis just wrapped up, coming up short of expectations this year. Men and women's golf head into conference championships this week and next.

Additional items discussed:

The Walt & Janice Owens Baseball field dedication was hosted this past Sunday with a great turnout; the Victor E. Sports fest and Gear Sale will be this weekend followed by the football Spring Showcase (festivities to begin at 10am followed by a HAF/Season Ticket Member luncheon in the Hall of Champions post-Spring Showcase); the Victor E. Bash fundraiser opens May 1 with a meld of online and in-person events throughout the week; the Huskie Summer Circuit, the annual Sr. Staff and head coach pilgrimage, dates coming up - June 5 (Pollyanna Brewing in St. Charles), June 6 (Ditka's in Oakbrook Terrace) and June 7 (Hard Rock in Rockford).

V. **Liaison Reports:**

- a. **Diversity Integration Group (D.I.G.)** – G. Roby/C. Vinson – G. Roby provided an overview of the D.I.G. working group. Several events are planned across campus this month (i.e. Take Back the Night, Active Bystander workshops and various speakers). The group also discussed the DEI portion of the NCAA inclusion framework. In reviewing the D.I.G. Action Plan, C.O.D.E. training and professional development will be key components.

Additional items: The D.I.G. survey will go out to the department on May 23rd after the Athletics Town Hall meeting; Jen Fry spoke to student-athletes and athletics staff respectively March 28th and 29th on conflict and social justice (ADEI will be looking into adding Jen Fry as a keynote in the upcoming year); social media highlights of women in the Athletics department that are not "seen" as often (behind the scenes) for Women's History Month included Randi Napientek, Rhonda Watts, Ashley Lambert, Courtney Vinson, Natalie Hall and Donna Turner; Mental Health Awareness Month coming up, programming to come; the search for the new VP/CDO is underway with Clint-Michael Reneau and Sean Frazier as co-chairs.

- b. **Finance and Facilities** – K. Hickey/J. Cheney/L. DeRango – J. Cheney gave an overview of the most recent meeting for the Finance and Facilities working group, who met on the 27th (document in Teams folder). Procurement is still working on bus RFP pieces and trying to find a broker. Staffing shortages are still impacting several areas (accounts payable, accounts receivable, etc.). Upcoming facilities projects include Recreation Center locker room updates and looking into rebates with ComEd to replace the stadium and softball lights to LED. The Finance and Facilities working group collectively decided to cancel their summer meeting, but plan to get together again before fall.
- c. **External Affairs** – B. McCormick/ R. Sedevie/ TJ Feuerbach – The External Affairs working group met on March 7th. T. Feuerbach provided a quick recap on their discussion. The new season ticket subscription model launched in February. Football, volleyball and men/women's basketball tickets are on sale now. Past and future events: MAC basketball tournament; football pro day; Huskies United, the NIU Foundation's giving campaign; Walt & Janice Owens Baseball field dedication; football Spring Showcase; Victor E. Bash; Victor's (5/04); Alumni Golf outing at Cantigny (5/22); Huskie Summer Circuit; Brigham Novak Golf outing (7/28); Women's Basketball

Golf outing (8/11); and Homecoming (10/14). The next External Affairs working group meeting is scheduled for May 24th.

VI. **Athletic Department Reports:**

- a. **Ticketed Sports Attendance & Revenue Outcomes** – J. Cheney went over sports attendance (document in Teams folder). He showed the comparison of last season to this season, pointing out the increase in revenues brought in and tickets sold. Men’s basketball was down a little, but nothing significant. As the season went on, there were upticks on single game sales for both men and women’s basketball due to in-season successes. Overall, ticket sales were down, but revenue was up due to changes in ticket prices. Volleyball is anticipating better numbers this year with a new coach and the intent to get marquee opponents in the main arena.
- b. **Men’s & Women’s Basketball Ticket Prices (2023-2024 AY)** – J. Cheney showed the updated basketball ticket prices (document in Teams folder). Prices will remain the same as last year, however there will be a slight increase in on-site purchase prices in an attempt to incentivize and encourage online (advance) purchasing.
- c. **Walk-up Sales for Football Ticket Prices** – J. Cheney went over the change to walk-up sales for football ticket prices (football ticket pricing was already presented this year – document in Teams folder). This is being presented again as there will now be an additional \$5 charge for walk-up sales at the stadium to encourage advance purchasing to avoid gameday connectivity issues.
- d. **End of Year Compliance Report** – M. Varnadoe provided an End of Year Compliance report (PowerPoint in Teams folder). One of the main purposes of the Athletic Board is to provide institutional control, ensuring the athletic department is not running amuck. The direct involvement of the board comes in the form of the appeals process for athletic financial aid and scholarships. The terms and conditions of a normal athletics scholarship: one-year agreements; student-athletes must be notified of their scholarship status by July 1 every year (the NIU Financial Aid office sends out); NCAA rules state we can cancel or reduce aid after the one-year agreement but have to provide a 15-day notice for an appeals process. M. Varnadoe noted that there has not been an appeal since 2020, but if there was, the Athletic Board would be involved in that process. A. Fogleman asked what needed to be done to renew scholarships annually. M. Varnadoe responded that this is usually a discussion between coaches and the student-athletes.

M. Varnadoe went over violations and waivers (see PowerPoint). There has been a total of five violations since April 2022, all minor. 19 waivers have been filed so far this academic year, with 18 of the 19 waivers approved. M. Varnadoe wrapped up discussion with the transfer portal and NIL. 52 student-athletes entered the transfer portal during the 2021-22 AY and 77 the year prior. 53 student-athletes have entered the portal so far this year. The NCAA adopted a transfer portal window, brand new as of August 1st, in an effort to help with roster management. B. McCormick asked if we see as many transfers coming in as going out, and M. Varnadoe responded that the numbers are roughly the same. A. Fogleman asked how coaches feel about the portal. C. Vinson remarked that it’s not necessarily beneficial for the institution, but student-athletes have more freedom. Name, Image and Likeness (NIL) has been in effect since July 1, 2022. There has been a total of 59 NIL deals reported over 31 student-athletes for NIU. B. McCormick asked if coaches assist in the NIL process, remarking that, theoretically, the bigger the NIL deal, the better it would be for NIU and recruiting. M. Varnadoe responded that this is not a coach responsibility, and Illinois has a state law that bars direct involvement of the

institution on the setting up/arrangement of NIL deals. NIU has partnered with Opendorse to provide opportunities.

- e. **HAF Revenue Generating Outcomes** – T. Feuerbach went over HAF revenue outcomes as of April 11th (document in Teams folder), noting that the change in season ticket renewals will impact the figures slightly, so not all figures are fully accurate. The first graph shows all monies received to date for the fiscal year (cheat sheet on page 2). As of 4/11, we are \$428,000 ahead of the curve from the same time last year in annual giving totals. S. Frazier noted that these totals do not include conference contributions, only fundraising contributions (different than the information Lisa DeRango provides earlier in the year with a breakdown of revenue streams). He added that these graphs are good snapshots showing the growth of our fundraising and donor base. G. Roby asked about the impact of lesser institutional contributions on the department to which S. Frazier responded that NIU is last in contributions from the institution amongst MAC schools, putting them at a recruiting disadvantage. T. Feuerbach continued to discuss premium sales, which are starting to come back up for football but need work in basketball. Discussions regarding current and upcoming capital projects ensued.

VII. **Announcements/Adjournment** – C. Hughes noted that this is the last meeting of this academic year and thanked the Board members for their service.

G. Roby made a motion to adjourn; B. McCormick seconded; meeting closed at 3:18 pm.