



ATHLETIC BOARD MEETING Nov 30, 2022 – 2:00 pm

Present: Courtney Hughes (Chair), Vincent Becker, Aaron Fogleman, Sean Frazier, Michele Hunt, Tom Libert, Madison Mathews, Brian McCormick, Aidan O'Brien, Glenn Roby, Laura Sala, John Siblik

Guests: John Cheney, Deputy AD/Executive Assoc. AD/Operations; Lisa DeRango, Sr. Assoc. AD/Human Resources & Finance Administration; TJ Feuerbach, Sr. Assoc. AD/Development & Revenue Generation; Anton Goff, Sr. Assoc. AD/Director of SAASS; Ryan Sedevie, Sr. Assoc. AD/Collegiate Advancement & External Affairs; Courtney Vinson, Sr. Assoc. AD/Sports Administration

- I. **Call to Order** – C. Hughes called the meeting to order at 2:00 pm.
- II. **Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes** – *Update to anniversary year of Homecoming*; J. Siblik moved to approve; G. Roby seconded; motion carried unanimously.
- III. **Athletic Department Report: SAAC Initiatives** – Madison Mathews, current member of the NIU Softball team and COSA representative, spoke to the board on the current initiatives of the Student-Athlete Advisory Committee (SAAC). The MAC's first initiative in the fall was mental health, with a focus on suicide prevention (held the last week of October). The goal this semester was to have higher student involvement/engagement, particularly from male student-athletes, and SAAC hoped that splitting some of the mental health group discussions between men and women's sports would assist in making both groups feel more comfortable. Monday night was game night; Tuesday was women's night, led by Shyann Beach, who is the Director of NIU Athletics Counseling, discussing how to help fellow Huskies and general topics surrounding suicide and suicide prevention. Wednesday was a Hidden Component meeting. Hidden Component is a non-profit group focused on student-athlete mental health. M. Mathews noted two other softball players in addition to herself created a chapter of Hidden Component at NIU. The meeting on Wednesday focused on knowing their roles, creating boundaries, and maintaining relationships. On Thursday, Brian Smith talked to male student-athletes about understanding and taking care of themselves, their emotions, and experiences. Friday was wrapped up with a Yoga session. The SAAC initiative for springs will be Diversity and Inclusion week (February 6 - February 10), with a focus on international students. SAAC has also selected the next theme for the Victor's award ceremony, which will be all black attire with red shoes. A. Fogelman asked if M. Mathews could expand on how student-athletes talk about mental health issues amongst themselves when not in a formal environment. M. Mathews indicated that they softball team does really well with this, checking in on each other and trying to support student-athletes that are struggling however they can, but could not speak to how the other sport programs managed. G. Roby asked if there were any takeaways on the reluctance of male student-athletes to participate in mental health programming. M. Mathews responded that she was unsure why the male student-athletes felt less comfortable talking about mental health, but noted that Shyann Beach has a very high number of student-athletes, both male and female, that meet with her regularly.
- IV. **Faculty Athletics Representative**
 - a. **APR Report** – C. Hughes briefly went over the APR report (private document presented during meeting). The APR is the NCAA's measurement used to assess academic progress. This rate considers eligibility and retention of student-athletes and is calculated per team. Each student-athlete who receives athletic financial aid is counted, receiving one point for going to school and

one point for being academically eligible. The fourth column in the chart is the rate over the past year, while the total in column two is a four-year snapshot. For smaller teams, there can be a larger impact if one student-athlete has a poor score, so C. Hughes noted that the size of the team should be considered when looking at some of the numbers. Overall, 10 of the 16 teams were at 1000 in the past year, so NIU is doing well.

- b. **GSR Report** – C. Hughes also discussed NIU’s GSR, Graduation Success Rate, another measure tracked by the NCAA with specific focus on graduation rates (private document presented during meeting). It was noted that the GSR gives credit for student-athletes who are in good academic standing that transfer in from another institution, but no penalties for transfers out. There are currently 6 teams with a 100 overall GSR from the 6-year snapshot. A. Fogelman remarked on the lower numbers for basketball and wrestling, to which C. Vinson responded that the GSR is still higher than the federal numbers, but those particular sports are consistently lower among most institutions. G. Roby asked if the transfer portal has affected these numbers in any way. C. Vinson answered that it has not from a GSR standpoint, as only student-athletes that are transferring *in* count. She did note that the portal may have more of an impact on APR as that is a more “real time” measurement.

- V. **Athletics Director Update** – S. Frazier provided a brief overview of the current happenings in NIU Athletics (document available in Teams folder). He remarked on the fall season not meeting expectations and the great adversity that several of the teams were faced with. He noted that there would be a statement of some kind going out to address adjustments that would be made moving forward, but also noted that so many factors including injury and external circumstance led to several disappointing results this fall. Men’s soccer lost a lot of their main lineup, so they were prepared for a rebuilding season this year. Women’s soccer is making strides with their new coaching staff. While they did not have a winning season, they had great momentum this year and are looking promising. S. Frazier indicated that winter sports had begun. Men’s basketball is still working through the coaching transitions and settling in, while women’s basketball has started off very competitive. S. Frazier is hopeful for great outcomes with all winter sports.

Other updates included:

- Huskies Invest – S. Frazier gave kudos to the HAF staff and the donors that contributed to this year’s fundraising initiative.
- Changes to coaching staff – S. Frazier made the difficult decision not to renew longtime NIU Volleyball coach, Ray Gooden. They are now in the hunt for a head coach, and the search committee (including C. Hughes, C. Vinson, A. Goff, and S. Frazier) are hoping to have a new coach by the end of this year. They are also seeking a new cross-country coach. S. Frazier remarked that coaching positions are so greatly rooted in an evaluative component (wins vs. losses) on and off the field, that the call to find both the volleyball and cross-country coach were made for the benefit of programs that have not had the successes they should have had in the past several years.
 - G. Roby asked if S. Frazier anticipated any negative impact in financial support based on the release of Ray Gooden and coming off a losing football season. S. Frazier responded that there could be some level of impact, but that based on the outcomes with Huskies Invest, he felt happy with the level of support that still remains from the donors and fanbase.

- NIU Athletics released their 2021-22 Annual Report (link in document and on niuhuskies.com). This document provides a snapshot of the past year's budget, academic and athletic accomplishments, fundraising efforts and more.

G. Roby asked if there was any intention of using coordinated structures like the Fan Advisory Board on a more purposeful level. T. Feuerbach responded that the HAF team is working on implementing a subscription-based model next year to hopefully ease up time for the HAF staff to focus more on the fundraising side of things. Rather than people donating money up front and receiving donor benefits based on the monetary category they fall in, the subscription based model would allow people to build their benefit packages and pay on a monthly basis rather than renewing annually. S. Frazier added that advisory committees had played a larger role when he first came to NIU, but that they offered more oversight than return and the amount of preparation going into those meetings did not bring additional value. He noted that there might be areas that could be further engaged in the future, and that they would discuss possibilities.

VI. **Liaison Reports:**

- a. **Diversity Integration Group (D.I.G.)** – G. Roby/C. Vinson – G. Roby praised the work that is being done by the Diversity Integration Group. C. Vinson provided a quick overview of some of the agenda items discussed at the most recent D.I.G. meeting. They will be reaching out to the Interfaith group on campus to get information on the different celebrations during the holiday season to share with the Athletics' department. On a grander scale, they are working through the DEI framework provided by the NCAA, which all institutions must follow. Owen Maisva, the Assistant Director for DEI, is currently comparing the framework the NCAA has laid out from step one (of four) with what D.I.G. is already doing. C. Vinson added that they will be continuing to review all steps as the program as it gets closer to implementation. The NCAA has also put out a DEI attestation that must be signed by President Freeman and S. Frazier by August 1, 2023, acknowledging the certification program and the recertification every four years. She noted that while they knew about the legislation for 2-3 years, the program itself only came out about 2 months ago and the NCAA wants to start certifying the program next year. She is not sure yet how this will work as she has more questions than answers at this point but will keep the board apprised as information is available. G. Roby brought up the D.I.G. Survey. C. Vinson expanded that the survey was conducted in June and that the Diversity Integration Group was able to go through the responses. For the most part, it appears that they are doing well, however there were several women who reported they felt negatively about language used in the department. Based on the results, there will be an education session in March regarding language inclusivity and non-gender bias in speech.
- b. **Finance and Facilities** – K. Hickey/J. Cheney/L. DeRango – J. Cheney noted that their next meeting was scheduled for January 8th and that they would have further updates at the next Athletic Board meeting.
- c. **External Affairs** – B. McCormick/ R. Sedevie/ TJ Feuerbach – B. McCormick shared that the group met earlier this week and talked about Athletics (fall and post season), campus updates, and the bid for IHSA Football. T. Feuerbach added that the Basketball radio show would start up again in January. R. Sedevie noted that they are still working on logistics; the show would likely be at Fatty's on Thursdays, however they are looking at the Huskie Den as another option, hoping to engage students better.

VII. **Athletic Department Reports:**

- a. **Huskies Invest Recap** – TJ Feuerbach went over a PowerPoint slide (available in the Teams folder) with a breakdown of the money raised during Huskies Invest. The initial goal was \$500,000, but they were fortunate enough to surpass the \$1 million mark for the 2nd year in a row, bringing the total raised since 2017 just shy of \$3.4 million. This year, they raised just north of \$500,000 in unrestricted gifts, which is huge as this money can be used in a variety of ways, providing flexibility to help different programs. Nearly \$300,000 came through for sport specific programs, and \$200,000 for facilities improvements (i.e. Walt and Janice Owens baseball field project, basketball locker rooms, and softball dugout). Roughly \$35,000 was raised for auxiliary programs (i.e. Phi Sigma Kappa Alumni Association of NIU Nutrition Center, SAASS, Sports Performance, Silverettes, Cheer, etc.).

- VIII. **Announcements/Adjournment** – G. Roby made a motion to adjourn; M. Hunt seconded; meeting closed at 2:50 pm.