**ATHLETIC BOARD MEETING**



**April 17, 2024 – 2:00 pm**

Present: Courtney Hughes (Chair), Ehsan Asoudegi, Sean Frazier, Michele Hunt, Rob Kerschke, Tom Libert, Brian McCormick, Glenn Roby, Laura Sala, John Siblik, Thomas Skuzinski

Guests: Chris Baker, Sr. Assoc. AD/Development & Revenue Generation; John Cheney, Deputy AD/Executive Assoc. AD/Operations; Lisa DeRango, Sr. Assoc. AD/Human Resources & Finance Administration; Scott Foelske, Assistant AD/Compliance; Randi Napientek, Sr. Assoc. AD/Director of SAASS; Ryan Sedevie, Sr. Assoc. AD/Collegiate Advancement & External Affairs; Courtney Vinson, Sr. Assoc. AD/Sports Administration/SWA

1. **Call to Order** – C. Hughes called the meeting to order at 2:02pm.
2. **Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes** – B. McCormick moved to approve; T. Libert seconded; motion carried unanimously.
3. **Faculty Athletics Representative –** C. Hughes discussed the Student-Athlete Advisory Committee (SAAC) (PowerPoint available in Teams folder). These committees were adopted by the NCAA in 1989 to bring more of a student voice to athletics. NIU’s SAAC consists of two or more students from each team (there is also representation at the MAC and national levels). Two representatives each year also serve on the Athletic Board advisory committee.NIU’s SAAC meets monthly to discuss issues and upcoming events. A representative from SAASS also attends these meetings to facilitate discussion and ensure things keep moving. C. Hughes attended the SAAC meeting last week, where representatives did an annual review. The meeting was very engaging, with discussions on things that worked, things that did not work, and ideas for what they can do better next year C. Hughes did make a note that scheduling has had some impact on attendance (conflicting events on campus), and asked board members to share any ideas on how to be more coordinated/collaborative to avoid future conflicts.
4. **Athletics Director Update** – S. Frazier gave an overview of the Spring sports (document available in Teams folder). Spring sports are in full swing. Baseball/softball continue to battle with constant weather changes. Men’s tennis had a big battle last weekend to wrap up their regular season. They will look forward to the conference championships beginning on Saturday, starting with Toledo. The women’s tennis team struggled during the regular season but has been picking up in conference play. Both men and women’s golf are in season. The men’s team will look to defend the conference title in late April as the women’s team, who has come in 2nd two years running, hopes to take home a title. Women’s track and field will be hosting the MAC Outdoor Championships at NIU.

Non-traditional spring slates for fall teams are also underway (volleyball, men/women’s soccer and football). Football will host their Spring Showcase on April 27th. The showcase will kick-off with Victor E. Fest and the annual gear sale before the football team hosts an open practice (pass pro/7-on-7/etc.), followed by autographs and a HAF donor luncheon. Other important events to look for this Spring: Huskie Royale and the Huskie Summer Circuit. Registration for Huskie Royale is currently up to 125 (200 spaces available). In partnership with Sycamore Education Foundation, this stewardship/fundraising event will be hosted at Acquaviva Winery in Maple Park on April 20th and boasts an auction including exclusive NIU Athletics experience packages. The Huskie Summer Circuit will be June 4, 5 and 6 around different locations in the Chicagoland area (Rockford, Oakbrook and St. Charles). Athletics’ Sr. Administrators and head coaches bus to each location to talk about our programs.

1. **Liaison Reports:**
2. **Diversity Integration Group (D.I.G.)** – G. Roby/C. Vinson – C. Vinson provided a brief recap of the D.I.G.’s most recent meeting. The group completed a majority of the current D.I.G. Action Plan and are currently working on creating a new and invigorating Action Plan for next year. The group also discussed planning a student-athlete cultural experience trip for the fall, likely connecting with the NC State football game.
3. **Finance and Facilities** – K. Hickey/J. Cheney/L. DeRango – J. Cheney noted that the Finance and Facilities working group schedules have not been lining up, so most of the information/updates are being exchanged via email (next meeting is set for late May). Updates for Athletics included*:* 1899 Club project proposal to go in front of the Board of Trustees FAFCO meeting in May for approval. The Huskie Stadium turf replacement is set to start May 3rd, after the Spring Showcase, with the intention of being ready by June. The Chick Evans Field House will be entering phase 2 or their renovations (locker rooms and support areas). They are currently finalizing the budget and design with the hopes of working through renovations over the summer. The Convocation Center parking lot C2 will also be undergoing repairs over the summer.
4. **External** **Affairs** – B. McCormick/R. Sedevie/C. Barker – R. Sedevie indicated that the group will be meeting on May 22nd.
5. **Athletic Department Reports:**
6. **Ticketed Sports Attendance & Revenue Outcomes (2023-2024 AY)** – J. Cheney provided a comparison document showing ticketed sports’ attendance and revenue from 2021-22, 2022-23, and 2023-24 (document available in Teams folder). In general, the sales numbers were up (red denotes decreases; green denotes increases). Football revenue this past year was around $715,000, the highest it has been in the past three years. Men’s basketball almost doubled their ticket revenue from the prior year, with ticket sales up nearly 20%. Women’s basketball saw similar gains, with attendance and tickets sold increasing by almost 30%. On average, all ticketed sports (football, men’s and women’s basketball, and volleyball), saw an approximate 20% increase across the board (save football attendance numbers). C. Hughes asked what might have contributed to the drastic increases in basketball revenue, to which J. Cheney responded that a lot of those increases came from significant single game walk-up sales and premium seat sales.
7. **Men’s & Women’s Basketball Ticket Prices (2024-2025 AY)** – J. Cheney noted that the ticket prices for men’s and women’s basketball in 2024-25 are nearly identical to last year’s, except the slight increase in walk-up purchases at the door (document available in Teams folder). The slightly higher price for walk-up sales is to cover credit card processing fees and staff.

1. **Walk-Up Sales for Football Ticket Prices** – J. Cheney also briefly went over a change in walk-up sales for football in the Fall (document available in Teams folder). The only change was to single game pricing, which will be determined by factors including east side vs. west side, Saturday vs. MACtion games, etc. For the most part, the ticket pricing will mirror what was done last fall.
2. **End of Year Compliance Report** – S. Foelske provided the End of Year Compliance Report (PowerPoint available in Teams folder). Compliance is about institutional control: following NCAA rules through education, monitoring and enforcement. At the beginning of all sport seasons, Compliance meets with coaches to go over rules. All activity is monitored through ARMS. If there is a need to enforce any rule violations, Compliance will submit to the NCAA for proper review and penalty enforcement. The Athletic Board is involved in student-athlete appeals for reduction or cancellation of athletic financial aid. Student-athletes have an opportunity to appeal within 15 days of notification of reduction/cancellation. In the past, scholarship agreements were on an annual basis; by July 1, the Financial Aid office is required to notify student-athletes if their athletic aid is being renewed or reduced. This August, the annual agreements will be changing into multi-year agreements. There will only be a select few reasons for the cancellation of athletic aid moving forward: ineligible for competition; fraudulent representation on applications, LOI or financial aid agreement; serious misconduct on campus; voluntary withdrawal (i.e. quitting); violating a non-athletic related condition in the financial aid agreement or NIU rule/policy; graduation, transfer, or exhausting eligibility. If a student-athlete notifies the office with their intent to transfer, their aid may not be reduced or cancelled until the end of the current academic term. If they intend to transfer between regular academic terms, their aid may be reduced/cancelled immediately.

S. Foelske also briefly went over NCAA violations and waivers. There have been 6 reported violations since April 2023, all minor infractions, which is typical for NIU. Also as of April 2023, NIU has filed 16 waivers. Other areas of interest: NCAA Transfer Portal and NIL. The NCAA Transfer Portal has currently seen 52 student-athletes enter this academic year from NIU. S. Foelske noted that they expected the number to go up slightly as we near the end of the semester (last year there were 72 student-athletes that entered by the end of year). B. McCormick asked if the portal drastically impacted recruiting. S. Frazier responded that it hasn’t had a huge impact to date but suspects it will more in the future. As of right now, we see just as many transfers in as we do out. Name, Image and Likeness (NIL) is also a growing topic in college athletics. This year, there was a total of 69 NIL deals reported at NIU, for 52 student-athletes. The average value was $464, with the largest deal at $3,500. Next year will see an increase in the number of deals for football student-athletes as EA Sports is bringing back their football college edition video game.

1. **HAF Revenue Generating Outcomes** – C. Barker gave an overview of the Huskie Athletic Fund (HAF) revenue generation from this past academic year. They saw a huge increase, nearly 46%, in sport specific giving. Their main focus moving into next year will be donor cultivation/growth. At this time last year, HAF had 717 donors; this year the number sits at 709. C. Barker noted that his team is constantly looking at ways to re-engage folks and get this number back up. Other areas of focus will be planned gifts, cost of attendance, premium area sales (premium sales will have their own HAF guide), and capital projects such as 1899 Club. C. Hughes mentioned engagement without an ask, indicating that it is sometimes nice to get a note or call without always having strings attached. C. Barked added that this past February, his team called season ticket holders just to say “Thank you”; they are looking to get back to more grassroots when it comes to fundraising/donor cultivation and stewardship.
2. **Announcements/Adjournment** – C. Hughes noted that meetings will continue next fall on Wednesdays. Anyone who will be returning to the board next year that is unable to make the meetings should designate someone to attend on their behalf. T. Skuzinski made an announcement that the Egyptian Theater would be hosting a free Earth Day event this Thursday evening.

G. Roby made a motion to adjourn; T. Skuzinski seconded; meeting closed at 2:48 pm.