



ATHLETIC BOARD MEETING September 13, 2023 – 2:00 pm

Present: Courtney Hughes (Chair), Gabriel Amegatcher, Ehsan Asoudegi, Aaron Fogleman, Sean Frazier, Jeanna Hunter, Bob Kerschke, Tom Libert, Brian McCormick, Jerri Reynolds, Glenn Roby, Emily Romancew, Laura Sala

Guests: Chris Barker, Sr. Assoc. AD/Development & Revenue Generation; 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; Randi Napientek, 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** – T. Libert moved to approve; J. Hunter seconded; motion carried unanimously.
- III. **Faculty Athletics Representative**
 - a. **Introductions & Overview** – C. Hughes opened the meeting with introductions of those in attendance:
 - i. Courtney Hughes – Faculty Athletics Representative; Associate Professor of Public Health
 - ii. Brian McCormick – College of Business, Department of Management
 - iii. John Cheney – Deputy Athletic Director
 - iv. Aaron Fogleman – History Department
 - v. Courtney Vinson – Athletics Administration
 - vi. Sean Frazier – Athletic Director
 - vii. Gabriel Amegatcher – Student-Athlete on the Football team
 - viii. Emily Romancew – Student-Athlete on the Women’s Golf team
 - ix. Ehsan Asoudegi – Industrial and System Engineering
 - x. Tom Libert – Alumni Board Representative
 - xi. Jerri Reynolds – School of Nursing; SPS Council Representative
 - xii. Jeanna Hunter – College of Law
 - xiii. Lara Sala – General Counsel’s Office
 - xiv. Glenn Roby – Huskie Athletic Fund Representative
 - xv. TJ Feuerbach – Athletics Administration
 - xvi. Bob Kerschke – Retail Dining; Operating Staff Representative
 - xvii. Ryan Sedevie – Athletics Administration
 - xviii. Chris Barker – Athletics Administration
 - xix. Lisa DeRango – Athletics Administration
 - xx. Randi Napientek – Athletics Administration/Student-Athlete Academic Success Services (SAASS)
 - b. **Overview** – C. Hughes provided a quick overview of the Athletic Board meetings, which are meant to look at policies for the Athletics department at NIU, ensuring compliance with the missions of the University. The Athletic Board reviews different areas within Athletics throughout the year and serves as the appeals committee for Athletic Aid appeals. There are four meetings per academic year, held on Wednesday afternoons beginning at 2pm. C. Hughes

reiterated that if any of the board members' schedules change in the Spring, to please let her know as it is crucial all areas have representation.

C. Hughes also brought up a presentation that she was hosting for student-athletes later in the day (mandatory for freshman student-athletes, but open to all student-athletes) on notetaking and communicating with professors. She stressed how important it was for all students, student-athletes in particular, to learn how to communicate with their professors when they might be absent or require accommodations based on their sport commitments. C. Hughes brought this to the board as she knew several members were professors of student-athletes on campus and wished to seek their input on anything they felt should be incorporated when she spoke with the student-athletes later in the day.

- c. **Athletics Director Update** – S. Frazier introduced and welcomed Chris Barker, the newest Sr. Associate Athletic Director of Development and Revenue Generation. C. Barker thanked the group and provided some of his background information. He and his wife were from Racine, Wisconsin, so he's always felt connected to the Midwest. His journey in Athletics started at UNC Greensborough where he got his undergraduate degree in Communications Studies and was a baseball student-athlete. He got his masters in Sport Administration at Delaware State University and served as a baseball coach there. His dream was always to impact student-athletes, so he moved into athletic administration, then served as a deputy Athletic Director at a DIII institution before becoming the Athletic Director at a DII institution (Southern Connecticut State) until finally joining NIU. S. Frazier noted that in addition to C. Barker, with the transition of Anton Goff, Randi Napientek would be taking over the position as the new Sr. Associate Athletic Director/Director of Student-Athlete Academic Success Services (SAASS).

S. Frazier continued his update by providing a brief overview of the sports that are currently in season (document available in Teams folder). Football has several new coaches, graduate assistants, and interns. They had a big win with Boston College, slight hiccup with SIU, but looking forward to Nebraska next week. Men's Soccer is playing in the Missouri Valley Conference this year rather than the MAC (no longer sponsored). T. Feuerbach noted that the new conference is much tougher, and that NIU would be playing the 15th ranked team in the nation, Missouri State, this coming Saturday at 6pm. S. Frazier went on to discuss Women's Soccer, Volleyball and the Cross Country/Men's and Women's Golf fall segments.

Additional updates included:

- i. The 2023-26 Athletics Strategic Plan was launched in August. The process was stalled during COVID, but the new plan includes five pillars that were determined after a comprehensive, department-wide, collaborative review process. S. Frazier noted that this was the 3rd Strategic Plan released during his time as AD with NIU.
- ii. NIU Athletics was able to take eight student-athletes from eight different teams on the Freedom Trail Tour in Boston while NIU was there for the football game. They also went to the museum of African American History and were able to have an immersive experience on what life was like for African Americans during that time.
- iii. NIU Football's 116th Homecoming versus Ohio is scheduled for 2:30PM, October 14, 2023. There will be several other events occurring in conjunction with the game (calendar link <https://www.niu.edu/homecoming/>).
- iv. The NIU Basketball Tip-Off Event is scheduled for October 10th at Fatty's in the Novak Room. Huskie Madness will also be coming up later in October (stay tuned for more information on that).

- v. Huskies Invest – A Week of Giving is an annual Athletics fundraiser, set for October 23-27, 2023.
- vi. S. Frazier will be serving as NACDA's (National Association for Collegiate Director's of Athletics) 3rd Vice President this year. He will continue to move up annually until he is the President. The last time a MAC AD was involved was in 1973, so S. Frazier was excited to represent both the Conference and NIU.

IV. **Liaison Reports:**

- a. **Diversity Integration Group (D.I.G.)** – G. Roby/C. Vinson – The Diversity Integration Group has not met yet this semester. Their first meeting will be on September 18, 2023.
- b. **Finance and Facilities** – K. Hickey/J. Cheney/L. DeRango – The Finance and Facilities Group has not met yet this semester. Their first meeting will be on September 19, 2023.
- c. **External Affairs** – B. McCormick/ R. Sedevie/ TJ Feuerbach – The External Affairs Group has not met yet this semester. They will be meeting soon and will be welcoming several new members.

V. **Athletic Department Reports:**

- a. **SAASS Academic Report (prior year)** – R. Napientek provided an overview of the previous year's academic progress (documents available in Teams folder). The spring term GPA saw another record-breaking semester with a 3.337 cumulative GPA. The graph indicating graduation success rates showed several different academic measurements. The green bar represents the federal graduation rate (86%). The federal rate is an NCAA metric that allows us to remove student-athletes that transfer out (they don't count against NIU). The blue bar is NIU's student-athlete graduation rate (70%), and the green bar is NIU student's graduate rate (51%). In looking at the percentages, NIU student-athletes are graduating at a higher rate than the general NIU student population. A. Fogleman asked how these rates compare with other MAC schools. R. Napientek responded that NIU is at the top.
- b. **Facilities Improvements (prior year) and FY Plan** – J. Cheney went over the Athletics enhancement projects in FY23 and future projects in FY24 (document available in Teams folder). The outdoor track was cleaned and repainted this past summer, soccer pads installed, and a restroom trailer is being installed today. In the Yordon Center, the graphics and carpet have been updated. The Sports Performance Center has seen some upgrades, including new weights coming in at the end of the month. The two items highlighted in blue are in the feasibility study phase (1899 Club & Chiller). J. Cheney referenced several other projects (see document in Teams folder) and noted that they are anticipating having to replace the turf in Huskie Stadium. A. Fogleman asked about the cost for the new turf. J. Cheney indicated that they will be meeting with turf representatives, but it will be approximately \$750,000. As this is an expense that was expected based on the average life of turf in the Midwest, they have already been planning for this in the budget (will not be additional debt). E. Asoudegi asked if there was anything to do to cover the fields to prolong their life. J. Cheney replied that they could tarp the fields, but it won't warranty any longer even with the cover. G. Roby asked if there were any plans to relocate the non-athletic tenants in the Chick Evans Fieldhouse. J. Cheney responded that there were no plans to do so at this time.
- c. **Complimentary Ticket Policy** – J. Cheney went over the Complimentary Ticket Policy (document available in the Teams folder). The numbers are essentially the same as last year. Student-

Athletes, game officials, administration, etc. can receive complimentary tickets per the policy. Athletic Board members are eligible to receive two tickets for any ticketed home sporting event.

- d. **Evaluation of Staff and Coaches** – L. DeRango did an overview of staff and coach evaluations (PowerPoint available in Teams folder). Coaches are evaluated at the end of their sport program’s competitive season; Supportive Professional Staff (SPS) are evaluated annually by June 30th; Civil Service evaluations are determined per campus guidelines (based on hire date). L. DeRango went over some of the evaluation documents. The evaluation tool was revamped after the pandemic and is a little more employee friendly. SPS uses the employee input tool. Coaches also use the employee input tool, but also use student-athlete exit interview surveys and student-athlete program evaluations (all evaluation tools are available in Teams folder). Student-athlete surveys are meant to assess the coaching staff in a variety of areas such as team conflict resolution, time demands, sport specific items (i.e. practice facilities, equipment, etc.), academic success, etc. They also assess areas like academics, compliance, and overall athletic experience. All of this is submitted for review. All coach reviews and student-athlete surveys are initiated by the Sport Administrator at the end of their competitive season. Upon completion, the head coach will first meet with their Sport Administrator to go over all evaluation forms, then with their Sport Administrator and the Athletic Director, and finally just with the Athletic Director. Civil Service evaluations are initiated by campus. T. Libert asked about what positives and negatives have been seen most often in the student-athlete surveys. C. Vinson answered that there is usually a lot of positive response on academic support and mental health, and some areas that student-athletes were less enthused about were food options and lack of gear (in their own opinions). E. Asoudegi asked if the feedback from the evaluation is provided back to the student-athletes. S. Frazier replied that he meets with several student-athletes throughout the year in various settings (i.e. Captain’s Council, Student-Athlete Advisory Committee (SAAC), etc.). These are ongoing conversations and there are several opportunities to discuss.
- e. **NCAA Attestation Program** – C. Vinson went over NCAA attestation requirements (PowerPoint available in Teams folder). Every DI institution must attest to compliance requirements. The institution’s President and Athletic Director sign off saying they are following the rules and regulations set forth by the NCAA and are not knowingly breaking any rules. This attestation is due on November 3rd. The next attestation is new and requires all DI institutions to attest compliance in diversity, equity and inclusion. Every four years, DI institutions go through a DEI review to ensure that they have the proper DEI programming within their athletic department. C. Vinson noted that NIU goes through the Division of Academic Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (ADEI) to review our programming. Once complete, the President and Athletic Director sign off on the attestation, which is also due on November 3rd. The last attestation is campus sexual violence, which has been in place for a while now. This is to ensure that student-athletes, coaches and staff are going through some form of sexual violence prevention training. NIU student-athletes go through ADEI for their training; NIU coaches and staff receive theirs through the Title IX office. This attestation is also due on November 3rd.
- VI. **Announcements/Adjournment** – E. Asoudegi asked when the board would review the financials (revenue, expenses, etc.). L. DeRango replied that they usually review at the 3rd Athletic Board meeting once they have closed out the year end financials.

G. Roby made a motion to adjourn; B. McCormick seconded; meeting closed at 2:50pm.