# **ATHLETIC BOARD MEETING**

**April 16, 2025 – 2:00pm – Convocation Center, Multi-Purpose Room**

Present: Courtney Hughes (Chair), Emily Belcher, Jacob Finley, Chad Fitz, Aaron Fogleman, Sean Frazier, Alexa Hayes, Jeanna Hunter, Paul Kassel, Rob Kerschke, Brian McCormick, Glenn Roby, Laura Sala

Guests: Chris Barker, Sr. Assoc. AD/Development & Revenue Generation; Jacey Brooks, Head Coach/Women’s Basketball; John Cheney, Deputy AD/Executive Assoc. AD/Operations; Lisa DeRango, Executive Assoc. AD/HR & Finance Administration; Scott Foelske, Assistant AD/Compliance; Matt Gonzalez, Sr. Assoc. AD/Facilities & Events; Ryan Sedevie, Sr. Assoc. AD/Collegiate Advancement & External Affairs; Courtney Vinson, Executive 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; P. Kassel seconded; motion carried unanimously.
3. **Introduction of Head Women’s Basketball Coach, Jacey Brooks** – C. Barker introduced the new Head Coach for Women’s Basketball, Jacey Brooks. J. Brooks indicated that while she had only been at NIU for just a little over a week, she has a long to-do list and is currently working on hiring staff and filling the team’s roster spots.
4. **Faculty Athletics Representative** – C. Hughes gave a quick shout out to Dr. Aaron Fogleman for winning the MAC’s Faculty Award for Student Success. She also addressed a scheduling conflict for the Men’s Basketball schedule next year, asking the Board if there were any issues with the team playing on Saturday, December 13th (finals end on Friday, December 12th). B. McCormick asked what the plan would be if one of the student-athletes had a final on that Friday. C. Vinson responded that they would either request a reschedule with the professor or send an academic advisor on the trip to administer the final. The Board did not oppose.
5. **Athletics Director Update** – S. Frazier provided an update on the current and upcoming events in Athletics (document available in Teams folder). Spring sports are under way. Baseball had a huge win again Northwestern yesterday. The Men’s and Women’s Tennis teams are also in the swing of things. Men’s Tennis is going through a transition year, while Women’s Tennis is currently having a record-breaking season. S. Frazier discussed his most recent Frazier’s Corner, speaking on the changing landscape in college athletics and the decision to move conferences beginning in Fall 2026. There were several factors that went into the decision process: 1. House Settlement ($2.8 billion over 10 years) – NIU will be opting in as a conference (components to consider: rev share and roster limits (i.e. football will only have 105 when they traditionally had 118)); 2. Transfer Portal; 3. Name, Image and Likeness (NIL) – student-athletes monetize and generate revenue by using their name, image and likeness; and 4. CFP Expansion. S. Frazier thanked the President, the BOT, Board members and the OGC for all of their work in the process. He understands that there is some trepidation about leaving the MAC, but this is the best option to anticipate the major changes in the college landscape for long-term sustainability of the program. There is a significant financial benefit to Football moving to the Mountain West, and the Horizon League will be a much more regionally beneficial conference than the MAC for the remaining sports (with the exception of Wrestling and Gymnastics). C. Fitz asked if S. Frazier anticipated any further changes in conference realignments to which S. Frazier responded that he feels conference expansion will continue. Other conferences in the Big 10 and SEC have the financial resources to support large scale travel from coast to coast, so they are not making decisions based on region anymore. The reason NIU decided to move Football was strictly a financial decision (Army, Navy and Hawaii are also Football only programs).
6. **Liaison Reports:**
7. **Diversity Integration Group (D.I.G.)** – G. Roby indicated that D.I.G. had a call this past week. On 4/28, Dining Services will partner with Athletics for a student-athlete international celebration held in Ellington’s, providing food for student-athletes from their home countries. The Hall of Champions in the Yordon Center also displays international student-athletes’ country flags. G. Roby wrapped up his report by noting that they are currently working on the logistics of the climate survey (specifically designed for staff this year), which is pending legal review.
8. **Finance and Facilities** – M. Gonzalez indicated that they have not met since the last meeting. He added that they expect the Softball dugout renovation to start in May.
9. **External** **Affairs** – B. McCormick reported out for the External Affairs group. They met on 2/19 and discussed multiple topics: HAF membership launch; Drive for 25 Campaign; Cram the Convo; Updates on the renewal rate for football season tickets (showing increase from last year); Huskies Ascend; and the upcoming Huskie Stadium 60th anniversary. C. Barker added that there is a lot going on in the Huskie Athletic Fund right now. Since the HAF launch on 2/18, they have already generated over $420,000 in pledges, gifts and gift-in-kind. They are currently looking at a participation rate 39% higher than last year at this time (1,235 donors this year) and have already secured six (6) Huskies Circle Members. He noted that it is important to continue to capitalize on current momentum and really start pushing naming rights.
10. **Athletic Department Reports:**
11. **Conference Transitions** – J. Cheney noted that there is not a lot happening with the Mountain West yet as they are wrapping up their academic year. He has a call this Friday to hopefully secure a conference for the Wrestling and Gymnastics programs. C. Vinson remarked that she had a call with the Horizon League a couple of weeks ago, and that they are looking at when they can start to incorporate NIU into their meetings.
12. **FY24 NCAA Financial Report** – L. DeRango discussed the FY24 NCAA Financial Report (document available in Teams folder). This report is completed every year at end of the fiscal year and captures the fiscal year activity for athletics. The NCAA categorizes how they do this with 20 unique revenue and expense categories. This report is audited by an outside accounting firm before being submitted to NCAA by January 15th. L. DeRango noted that the report can also be used to benchmark what other conference institutions are doing. She proceeded to go over the revenue categories (i.e. ticket sales, student fees, etc.) and expenses (i.e. student aid, travel, staff, operations, etc.). The data is collected from various sources (financial aid department, athletic business office, compliance office, foundation, budget office, controllers, office, etc.). L. DeRango remarked that from a high-level analysis, overall expenses exceeded revenue. Reasons that contributed to the deficit included increases in student aid (room and board increased 22% since FY23), student fees (greatest revenue stream was reduced by 2%, reduction in University support (1.6% reduction in direct support, and 3.5% reduction in tuition waivers), increases in overall expenses due to vendor price increases/inflation, sport travel changes (i.e. women’s basketball required several more charters than previous year due to their competitive schedule), etc. A. Fogleman asked about the Bowl expenses. L. DeRango answered that the MAC does not cover all expenses for Bowl travel and S. Frazier added that Bowl games are not necessarily money makers, but they get us exposure and provide opportunities for student-athletes and donors alike.
13. **Ticketed Sports Attendance and Revenue Outcomes (2023-2024 AY)** – C. Barker provided the group with a year-to-year comparison of the ticketed sports attendance and revenue (document available in Teams folder). S. Frazier added that this is an area that needs to be more productive; ticket sales and attendance have not been meeting expectations for a number of years. C. Barker noted that more Saturday games should really help with Football sales, and pushing the regional advantage for the remaining sports will be the marketing strategy moving into Fall 2026.
14. **Men and Women’s Basketball Ticket Prices (2024-2025 AY)** – C. Barker indicated that there were no changes in the Basketball prices this year (document available in Teams folder).
15. **Walk-up Sales for Football Ticket Prices** – C. Barker noted a change from last year’s Football ticket prices (document available in Teams folder). Walk-up sales will be tiered pricing this year. Season ticket prices will remain the same. C. Barker added that there was also a change in Volleyball general admission season ticket prices, which will now match the price of Women’s Basketball general admission season tickets prices.
16. **End of Year Compliance Report** – S. Foelske provided the group with an End of Year Compliance Report (PowerPoint available in Teams folder). The Compliance Office is responsible for institutional control through educational efforts, monitoring, and reporting violations. A main component to the Athletic Board is assisting with athletic financial aid cancellation or reduction hearings. Any time a student-athlete’s scholarship is reduced or cancelled, the student-athlete has an opportunity to request an appeal hearing. The student-athlete must be notified whether their scholarship is renewed or not by July 1st every year (comes from financial aid office). From the date of notice, the student-athlete then has 10 days to appeal. S. Foelske noted that additional scholarship protections were put in place beginning 8/1/24, no longer allowing “athletic” reasons (i.e. performance) as a reason for non-renewal or reduction.

S. Foelske also went over various other aspects of the Compliance Office:

* + Violations – 4 have been submitted since April 2024)
  + Waivers – 4 have been filed since April 2024 (extensions of eligibility, competition waivers, and legislative relief waivers)
  + Transfer Portal – 52 athletes have entered this year, though the number will likely climb as the portal opens for Football and spring. S. Frazier remarked on the high number of Division I Men’s Basketball student-athletes in the portal, which was at 2,346 as of 4/16 (there are only 5,460 opportunities in DI Men’s Basketball total); he added that students are cycling through 4-5 places chasing money.
  + NIL – 72 NIL deals across 44 student-athletes averaging $2,000 with the largest sum of $20,000 coming from an EA Sports deal (since 7/01/24). There will be several more disclosures this spring with the College Sports video game. C. Fitz asked how NIU measures up with other conferences for NIL deals. R. Sedevie replied that NIU is probably in the bottom 1/3 across the MAC in revenue and deals. He added that as far as exposure, NIU has bigger companies associated with them but smaller dollar values, and that the student-athlete reach (especially social media presence) plays a big factor in these deals. S. Frazier remarked that he is happy for the athletes and has no problem with them making money on NIL but wants to ensure that it does not compromise academics and graduation. He worries about student-athletes’ ability to manage money and execution outside of athletic department. B. McCormick asked if NIU helps educate. C. Vinson replied that the NCAA requires every institution to provide some form of financial literacy. NIU provides both tax and financial education opportunities to all student-athletes.
  + House Settlement – Applies to autonomy conferences with other schools opting in by June 15th of this year. In addition to the payout, there will be roster limits by sports, and institutions will be able to make NIL deals directly with student-athletes under the settlement (limited to a pool cap, based on revenue from the autonomy conference schools plus Notre Dame).

1. **Announcements/Adjournment** – A. Hayes made a motion to adjourn; P. Kassel seconded; meeting closed at 3:40pm.