ATHLETIC BOARD MEETING

September 11, 2024 – 2:00 pm

**Present**

Members: Courtney Hughes (Chair); Ehsan Asoudegi; Aaron Fogelman; Sean T. Frazier; Kari Hickey; Michele Hunt; Jeanna Hunter; Paul Kassel; Rob Kerschke; Ralph Kurski; Tom Libert; Brian McCormick, Glenn Roby; Laura Sala; John Siblik; Thomas Skuzinski

Guests: Chris Barker, Sr. Assoc. AD/Development & Revenue Generation; John Cheney, Deputy AD/Executive Assoc. AD/Operations; Lisa DeRango, Executive Assoc. AD/Human Resources & Finance Administration; Randi Napientek, Sr. Assoc. AD/Director of SAASS; 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 2:01pm.
2. **Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes** – G. Roby moved to approve; K. Hickey seconded; motion carried unanimously.
3. **Faculty Athletics Representative –** C. Hughes conducted Athletic Board Introductions and an overview of responsibilities for the Board. There are still some vacancies on the board including students. The goal of the Board is to ensure that the programs are of high quality. The board meets four times per year. Gave four main areas of the meeting structure: Academics, Finance and Facilities, Diversity Integration, and External Affairs. The group went around the room saying their name, area of university representing, and one word of how they experienced the Notre Dame win this past Saturday.
4. **Introduction of Head Softball Coach** – C. Hughes introduced our new Head Softball Coach, Kathryn Gleason, from Northern Kentucky. K. Gleason has over 250 career wins and played at Michigan. She grew up in Chicago with a large family in the area and has a passion for coaching that really shines through. K. Gleason addressed the Board, thanking them for their support, and remarking on their importance in the student experience.
5. **Athletics Director Update** – S. Frazier gave an overview of the Fall sports (document available in Teams folder). S. Frazier mentioned the Notre Dame win and the ripple effect that this win caused, however noted that we still have a lot of games left to play. The “Boneyard Victory” (title given to wins over opponents from larger conferences) marks a first-time victory of a Top 10 opponent in the history of NIU. The next football game is against Buffalo so please come out to support. S. Frazier added that NIU’s underdog status is resonating on social media, noting that just this past Saturday/Sunday alone there were 13.3 million impressions on socials. The win over Notre Dame also vaulted NIU into the Top 25 of College Social Press Ranking.

Some of the other sports that are also fully engaged are men’s and women’s soccer. Women’s soccer is experiencing a great season right now, with Coach O’Neill really turning the program around. Men’s soccer has a young team and will continue to push forward under Coach Swan’s leadership. Volleyball also has a young team, and Coach D’Amore is working on building her team into her second season. Cross country is also plugging away, with several great competitors.

S. Frazier shared the 125th Athletics logo with the Board. These logos will be embedded in our competition sites and in all of our events. He also noted the 117th NIU Homecoming against Toledo, adding that there will be a ton of events surrounding the event and urged the Board members to come out to support the University. Additional updates included: Basketball tip-off event (10/08); Huskies Invest, a week-long annual fundraising campaign in November (goal of $1 million +, and 125 donors in honor of 125th anniversary); Notre Dame recap included discussion on $1.4 million game guarantee and how guarantees work (S. Frazier remarked that beating Notre Dame actually makes future guarantees more difficult because some non-conference teams may not want to play us now).

# Liaison Reports:

* 1. **Diversity Integration Group (D.I.G.)** – G. Roby/C. Vinson – C. Vinson indicated that they have not had their first meeting yet, but are working on the cultural experience trip, D.I.G. Action Plan, and a Climate Survey.
  2. **Finance and Facilities** – K. Hickey/L. DeRango/M. Gonzalez – First meeting to be held on October 29, 2024. Meetings will move to twice per year.
  3. **External Affairs** – B. McCormick/R. Sedevie/C. Barker – B. McCormick shared hard points of current promotions for the upcoming football game on 9/21: Salute to Service (184 tickets out of 500 claimed); Band Day (1800 band students); $12.50 East Side general admission; Boneyard $19/ticket West Side general admission.

# Athletic Department Reports:

* 1. **SAASS Academic Report (prior year)** – R. Napientek provided an update (reports available in Teams folder) on Academic Performance (shared graph). Student-athletes are pursuing majors in areas they want and are doing great things in the classroom. They have a combined GPA of 3.408, which is a department record. Other academic highlights: NIU student-athletes have an 88% Graduation Success Rate (GSR) (transfers out do not count as a loss on the GSR rate); 67 students had a 4.0 in the Spring semester; 109 student-athletes graduated in the Spring; 424 student-athletes participated in 3400 community hours last year.

R. Napientek also shared the APR graph, which shows student-athlete retention. The combined rate is 983. NIU is retaining and graduating their students and doing phenomenal things in the classroom and in the community. Th Board brought forth again that this information MUST be sent out across campus. The faculty does not know this, and they need to hear it. SAASS has begun emailing the colleges and colleges are now posting on social media as well. Dean’s Council/P. Kassel invited S. Frazier to talk about these achievements and how we can promote a sense of belonging/connection to athletics. K. Hickey mentioned giving appreciation to the faculty as well for how hard they work to accommodate student-athlete schedules. R. Napientek followed up explaining our Faculty Recognition program. K. Hickey suggested giving one pair of tickets that can be raffled off to faculty. C. Hughes mentioned a specific thank you program to faculty from the student-athletes.

* 1. **Facilities Improvements (prior year) and FY plan** – J. Cheney provided an overview of last year’s improvements and this fiscal year’s plan (document available in Teams folder). There are several projects that go to BOT next week for final approval (not necessarily athletic projects but campus projects that involve athletic facilities, like Solar Panels and efficient lighting). The 1899 Club is the largest project in athletics, hoping to provide training tables for student-athletes. Right now, football gets one meal, however many teams do not get any. This project will allow NIU athletics to feed student-athletes and offer study halls, etc. There was a question regarding “1899” and the history of athletics. R. Sedevie gave a run-down of the archives we have but most are on paper and very expensive to go digital. Additional project plans included: updated signage at the Yordon Center and the Huskie Stadium sound system (previously repaired but looking at review of replacement for FY26 along with video board). Facilities enhancements are continuing in the Recreation Center with modernization of the locker rooms, updated paint/graphic, and the new apparel store up front. L. DeRango added that they are working with Admissions to add the Rec to campus tours, as well as providing them with a video of the Rec and E-Brochure to put into Admission packets.
  2. **Complimentary Ticket Policy** – C. Barker provided the policies for football, men’s and women’s basketball, and volleyball complimentary tickets (documents available in the Teams folder). He also mentioned ARMS as the new way to obtain/request tickets and provided B. Tallitsch’s information for ticket related help/questions.
  3. **NCAA Attestation Programs** – C. Vinson provided a presentation (document available in Teams folder) from a Compliance standpoint of how the NCAA has created a few attestations where we certify to the NCAA on each of the following programs: Campus Sexual Violence Prevention Program; DEI; Compliance (to include outside income, unethical conduct, and sports wagering); Academic Support Services; Life Skills; Consensus Based Health, Safety and Performance; and Student-Athlete Career Services. C. Vinson answered a question posed that they have not had any wagering incidents at NIU. She added that sports gambling is legal in many states, which does pose a problem.

1. **Announcements/Adjournment** – C. Hughes asked if there were any other items to discuss before closing. P. Kassel brought up the Artists for Athletes/Athletes for Artists program. He noted that success of the program hinges on connections to continue to build on this collaboration, which he hopes will show everyone how important it is for everyone when we are all part of the game. He encouraged the Board to help bring populations to both Athletic and Artistic events.

G. Roby made a motion to adjourn; B. McCormick seconded; meeting closed at 3:15 pm.