

**TRANSCRIPT**

**FACULTY SENATE**

**Wednesday, SEPTEMBER 6, 2023, 3 p.m.**

**Altgeld Hall Auditorium, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor**

**Northern Illinois University**

**DeKalb, Illinois**

**VOTING MEMBERS PRESENT:** Arado, Atkins, Barrett, Boswell, Brain, Chomentowski, Coulter (for Rossetti), Creed, Demir, Finch, Fotovat, Geisler, Graves, Guzman, Harris, Hartenhoff, Ito, Johnson, Jong, Kim, Liberty, Luo, Marsh, McGowan, Mellon, Naples, Nesterov, Nyunt, Qin, Salimi, Scanlon, Sharp, Sirotkin, Slotsve, Vahabzadeh, Vahedian, Valentiner, Van Wienen, Wang, Whedbee, Xie

**VOTING MEMBERS ABSENT:** Bohanon, Campbell, Duffin, Lampi, McKee, Rossetti, Staikidis, Swedlow, Vaezi

**OTHERS PRESENT:** Bryan, Elish-Piper, González, Hughes, Kortegast, Lee-Gordon, Richter, Rhode, Saborío, Schatteman, Sumner

**OTHERS ABSENT:** Cripe, Jaekel

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

**B. Creed:** Good afternoon. I'll call the meeting to order for Wednesday, Sept. 6, 2023.

**II. VERIFICATION OF QUORUM**

**B. Creed:** Pat, do we have a quorum?

**P. Erickson:** We do have a quorum. Also, just a reminder to complete the attendance slip and leave it at your place so we can collect them after the meeting. Also, even though you might have a loud and clear voice, please use the microphones if you wish to make a comment or ask a question so that we can get a clear recording. Also, if you tell us your name and the constituency you represent, that's helpful.

### III. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

**B. Creed:** May I have a motion to adopt the agenda? Okay, George, and a second? Thank you. Any discussion? All right, all in favor of adopting the agenda, please say aye.

**Members:** Aye.

**B. Creed:** Opposed? All right.

### IV. APPROVAL OF THE APRIL 26, 2023, MINUTES

**B. Creed:** May I have a motion to approve the minutes of the April 26, 2023, meeting? Okay, George and then Natasha Johnson second. Any discussion? All right, can we have a vote? All in favor of approving the minutes for April 26, 2023, please say aye.

**Members:** Aye.

**B. Creed:** Opposed? All right.

### V. PUBLIC COMMENT

**B. Creed:** Pat, do we have any public comment?

**P. Erickson:** No public comment today.

### VI. FACULTY SENATE PRESIDENT'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

**B. Creed:** So, already to item VI, Faculty Senate President's Announcements. First, I want to welcome everybody to our first Faculty Senate meeting of the year. Thank you to each of you for your willingness to serve in shared governance, which really does represent the ideal of how working collaboratively on shared changes, topics and priorities can improve our institution in the short term, but then also can lead to the vibrant, inclusive and engaging institution we all want it to continue to be in the long term.

I want to say a particular thank you and welcome to our folks that are new to Faculty Senate this year. I look forward to meeting you all and working with you over the course of this upcoming academic year.

We do have a packed agenda, so I'm going to stay brief in my first time with the mic in open space, but I wanted to really highlight one of my priorities for the Faculty Senate for this upcoming year. And that is communication and the flow of information. So, it's really two, but they're tied together. In my conversations that I've been having in this role with shared leadership, with faculty members, staff and other groups across campus, I'm seeing the value and the opportunity for advocacy, for perspective sharing, and to help inform decisions which impact the students, faculty and staff here

at NIU. And this body has the authority to directly make changes in some areas, the ability to inform important conversations that are going on on campus, and also to help encourage the changes that we hope to see on campus and elevate perspectives in those conversations.

In order for me to do my job as Faculty Senate president, I really want to talk about two activities that are tied to communication and the flow of information within this larger body of the Faculty Senate. The first is that there will be a number of times throughout the academic year where I'll be asking everybody here and the other faculty senators who are not here today to respond to a quick survey with input from, and on behalf of, your constituent groups in alignment with topics that are going on that I'm engaged in, and conversations I'm a part of, to help make sure that I can best advocate from the collective perspective, not just my own perspective or my own beliefs and perceptions of what the perspective is. So, when we do see some of those opportunities come up, I really hope that you take the time, just a couple of minutes, to talk to folks in your constituency group and then share those findings back during a short two- to three-minute survey during a Faculty Senate meeting. So, you won't have to do it outside, we'll carve out time as we percolate here at the beginning of the meetings.

The second effort that I'm going to be engaged in is at the end of each Faculty Senate meeting, it won't be the day of, it won't be the day after, but shortly after, I will send a summary of bullet points, sort of the main topics coming out of Faculty Senate conversations and sharing those resources so that you can share them directly back to your departments or with your constituent groups as they may be.

And the hope for both of these efforts is to create communication, to have an exchange of ideas that comes from our guest speakers to this body and back to faculty, staff and students across campus, but also so we can move the other way as well, and I can learn from faculty, staff and students so that I can better advocate, better position ourselves, and make sure that the work of shared governance flows well and aligns with the collaborative and shared collective perspectives of those across campus, which this body represents. And, really, the hope is that, through these efforts, we'll be able to collaboratively meet the university goals, work toward our own personal and professional goals, and all those in between; and then create a campus that works for all Huskies.

So, again, welcome, and thank you all for serving.

## **VII. PROVOST'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

**B. Creed:** With that, I will be happy to turn to agenda item VII., which is Provost's Announcements, and I'd like to invite Provost Elish-Piper up to share her announcements.

**L. Elish-Piper:** Thanks. Faculty Senate looks strange in here. I served as a faculty senator for a number of years, and we used to meet in the Sky Room in the Holmes Student Center. And so, I feel like I'm in a different room. When I saw the microphone, I'm like, I guess I go up to the podium.

But it's good to see everyone. First of all, I want to say that I'm honored to have the opportunity to serve as the interim executive vice president and provost; and I saw some of you, I assume, as some of the all-college meetings that Bárbara González and Alicia Schatteman and I attended. At those meetings, we really wanted to bring a few key strategies, priorities that we're working on; and I'm going to talk about the ones that I'm really trying to lean into initially in my work.

One aligns with what Ben talked about, which is communication. And so trying to do a better job of creating communication that flows, not just from the Provost's Office, but flows into the Provost's Office, and making sure that that communication is more transparent, it's more frequent, it's more interactive. And in about another week or so, you'll be getting the second Academic Affairs newsletter. We started that right before the launch of the semester. And so, that will be one strategy we'll be using. We'll also be using a number of other approaches to try and improve communication, and many of those will roll out this fall semester. But the newsletter is the first one we've been able to launch.

The second thing that I wanted to share is that, since entering this role on July 1, I've really been working hard trying to collaborate with other divisions. Academic Affairs is the core of the core mission of the university, and as such, we do a lot of work, but we can't do that work without collaboration with other divisions. For example, working closely with Student Affairs, because our students don't bifurcate their experiences – oh that happened in Academic Affairs, that happened in Student Affairs – it's all integrated for them. But, also working with other divisions, like Research and Innovation Partnerships, and really specifically with Finance and Administration. You probably heard about our budget deficit, and one of the key things that I've been trying to do is to make sure that any conversations that we're having about strategies to address the budget deficit, that we're leading with academic affairs, we're leading with making responsible decisions in terms of academic affairs, while we're also looking at financial sustainability. And so, those collaborative relationships are really going to continue to be incredibly important.

And the third priority area is student retention. As we know, as an institution that prioritizes equity and access, we want to make sure that all our students have every opportunity to be successful while they're here at NIU. And so, to that end, really trying to work on some strategies to support student retention. Just today in our dean and provost roundtable meeting, we shared strategies from different colleges and are trying to really look at ways that we can provide more support for our students to be successful. And that's an important approach for two reasons: One, it's the right thing to do, because as an institution, that's why we're here, right? We want our students to earn their degrees, to go on to meet their goals, to contribute to their fields and to our community and society in a lot of meaningful ways. But it's also a good way to address our budget deficit. Retaining students really helps us from a financial perspective. So, you'll be hearing more about that in the upcoming Academic Affairs newsletter.

I also wanted to mention that in this very room, right before the start of the semester, had a chance to meet the 25 new faculty who were hired for this fall. And so, we've hired some great new colleagues. And so if you have any of those folks in your departments or your programs or your hallways, please reach out to, and support, them, because retention isn't just for students. We also

need to think about what we can do to retain our faculty and to make sure that they are also having successful experiences. So, if you haven't met the new faculty in your college or in your department, please reach out to them, because those kinds of connections are important and do matter.

And last, but not least, I want to talk just a tiny bit about the Higher Learning Commission. You've probably been hearing where we are in the process. I have a couple notes so I don't get my dates wrong. Right now the assurance argument is being finalized, and we'll be asking for campus feedback in October. And it's important for campus to offer that feedback so that we have broad based input from around campus. In addition to that, there will be a survey for students in the first week of the spring semester. So, there will be an opportunity for faculty to help get students to respond to that. And these dates you'll want to put on your calendar if they're not already there: March 25 and 26 is when we will be having our HLC visitors on campus. You'll be hearing much more about that, but I just wanted to put that out there so that you knew those things would be coming. And so, as Ben said, those are things we want to make sure we're communicating back to our colleagues locally so we can have meaningful and significant input and connections across campus.

So, with that, I will conclude my announcements. I'm not sure if those were announcements, remarks or comments, maybe a little bit of all of the above; but that's what I have for you today. Thank you.

**B. Creed:** Thank you so much, Provost Elish-Piper.

## **VIII. ITEMS FOR FACULTY SENATE CONSIDERATION**

- A. Blackboard Ultra Transition Update  
Jason Rhode, Associate Vice Provost for Teaching, Learning and Digital Education  
Stephanie Richter, Director of Teaching Excellence and Support

**B. Creed:** And that brings us to the next agenda item, which is agenda item VIII. And you'll see we have three different presentations for this part. The first presentation is going to cover updates related to the transition to Blackboard Ultra across campus, and I'll invite up Jason Rhode and Stephanie Richter to share information on that.

**J. Rhode:** Thank you so much for the invitation to come and join and speak briefly. We wanted to just offer a quick update on our transition to Blackboard Ultra. Blackboard is one of the mission critical infrastructure platforms that we have here at the institution for teaching and learning. We've had Blackboard as our learning management system here at NIU for over 20 years. And we're in the midst of upgrading, migrating to the latest and greatest Blackboard Ultra course view experience. And so we wanted to give you a quick update today as to where we're at in that process, as well as Ben talked about earlier, and ask of you to share some feedback and to go back to your constituents to help us gather some further impact in terms of what are some of the key features that are coming, things that might further help us in helping those that haven't yet made this transition to be prepared and excited to make that transition by the deadline that we have, which is spring 2024.

I'm going to talk very briefly, and then I'm going to turn things over to Stephanie to go into more of the support that we have and kind of where we're at. Just to give you a snapshot here, as of the summer, as we went into summer, we had close to about 40 percent of our course sections, 38.9 percent of our course sections in spring were taught in Blackboard Ultra, the Ultra Course View. So, now we're about 18 months into this transition institution wide. And we were excited to see as we head into the start of the fall semester, over the summer, we went from about 38 percent of those courses to in the summer we were at 66 percent. So, two-thirds of the courses taught in the summer term were taught in Ultra Course View. So, we're excited to see that as of the fall adoption, and so, this is data as of the 28<sup>th</sup>, so last week, we were at just almost 77 percent of our fall courses are being taught in the Ultra Course View, which is fantastic. We're really excited to see that faculty have taken advantage of the many supports and resources that we've had and are already teaching in the Ultra Course view, and so that's really fantastic.

And so, we wanted to talk briefly and let you all know that we're continuing to offer support for faculty this fall. These slides will be shared, and we'll have links that you can pass along, as well. So, certainly, help us spread the word. If you have colleagues who have not made this transition yet, but perhaps you have, help us spread the words that there are these great supports in place this fall to help faculty prepare to be teaching in the Blackboard Ultra Course View for the spring.

I'm going to turn it over to Stephanie, and she's going to talk a little bit about these supports.

**S. Richter:** Thanks, Jason. I have literally one more slide, that's it right here. This summarizes the support we're offering this fall and into the spring semester to help you or your colleagues make the transition to the Ultra Course View so that you can teach in the Ultra Course View in the spring 2024 semester.

The first one is on a monthly basis, we offer a one-hour workshop that is online, on making the transition to the Ultra Course View. This one is the quick way to get a little bit of information and get started. Again, every month, at least once a month, it's offered. We also have recordings for someone to watch if they can't make it live.

We are going to be offering our Blackboard Ultra Transition Academy twice this fall. We've offered this now four times, and so we'll have two more to cap off this semester. This is a three-week online course that has a wealth of information to guide you through the process of building, not just any course, but building your course. So, you get to work on something that's going to be relevant for you and make your life easier in transitioning for the spring semester. Throughout that three-week academy, you're also partnered with someone who has experience teaching in the Ultra Course View. We have a number of faculty ambassadors, I'm going to pick on Therese, because she's in the back there. She's been one of our fantastic ambassadors. If I missed someone else in the room who has been, thank you. You get to form those connections and hear from someone who's made the transition, or to work with a member of our staff one-on-one to answer your questions, transition your course, in a way that works best for you.

We're also then offering a version of that is self-paced that's fully online and completely asynchronous that has all of the same content, all of the same tips. It has the same recommendations, but they're not assignments anymore, because we're not grading them. It's just

for you to work on again for your own benefit. If you've made the transition to the Ultra Course View, and you feel like you're missing some information, that self-paced workshop is a great way to find just the pieces that you need to supplement your knowledge and your own confidence.

And we always offer one-on-one consultations. If you need to meet with someone to go over your course, get some feedback, ask a question, you can't figure out how to solve something in your course design, you can sign up online to meet with us one-on-one at a time of your convenience. We're open Monday through Friday, 8 to 4:30, just like the university. And so, that's a dedicated time for you to ask a question and meet. Actually, you can go to [citl.niu.edu/conversations](http://citl.niu.edu/conversations), or there's a link in that article on how to get there, so that you can book a time and get that on your own calendar and on ours.

We have an Ultra Course View template that's available to you. It is optional, so if you request it from us, we add you to that course in Blackboard with a role that lets you copy it into your own courses. You can choose whether or not to use it once you have access to it. You can also modify it once it's in your course. The idea with the template is it's really hard sometimes to get started from a blank page; I think we've all experienced that at some point. So, the template gives you a structure you can use to build on as you re-envision your course in the Ultra Course View. Again, fully editable, fully optional, but just there for you as a resource.

In addition to these things, I thought I should also mention that we are on campus Monday through Friday, 8 to 4:30, in our building, which is between the parking garage and the library. Before you say there's not a building there, there is. It's by the visitor parking lot side, not over by Normal Road. You can drop in and work with someone one-on-one then too in person, and we'll be more than happy to look at your course and answer your questions, specifically.

If you don't mind, the QR Code here and that shortened URL code is there to provide a quick way for you to get access to this. Please share it with your colleagues, share it back with your departments. We're trying to get the word out in as many ways as we can so that anyone who does need that support knows that we're here and available.

I also wanted to point out one last thing and we're not going to go through these in detail, but Ultra Course View is constantly changing. We have new updates on a monthly basis. There have been 70 new updates since the start of 2023 alone, and more on the way. In fact, the next update is tomorrow with even more features coming. So, if there's something that you're missing from the Ultra Course View or something that's not working the way you want it to, hold out, it might be coming soon. Give us your feedback; we work closely with Blackboard to provide feedback from you to them. In fact, I just arranged a meeting between one of our instructors and a product development UX designer to give feedback directly on her experience with grading in the Ultra Course View. So, please give us your feedback; we will work with Blackboard on getting that to them, or we can connect you with them to provide that so we can keep making the Ultra Course View even better.

Thank you.

**B. Creed:** Thank you both. Are there any questions for either Jason or Stephanie? Just a reminder, if you do have them, if you could use the microphones.

**E. Nesterov:** [inaudible]

**S. Richter:** I hear a couple of questions embedded all in one there. The first one that I'll address is building a course from scratch or copying. We go into detail in the courses, as well, on this. But the answer is about a year ago, Blackboard added a feature where you can granularly copy pieces into your course in Ultra. In the past, originally, we discouraged copying, because it would scramble things up quite a bit. Now what we encourage is selectively copying. So, instead of rebuilding, you start with your fresh Ultra Course, and you can pull things in selectively into the structure that you want it to be in that takes advantage of the Ultra Course View and what it affords for us and for our students. So, that's maybe the first question – you don't have to start over.

The second piece of that is why move to Ultra, and that's a really complex question. What I can say institutionally, is a couple of things. One is the original course view is 12 or 14 years old at this point. It's a really old, clunky system that doesn't meet our students' expectations. So, to match the technology with what our students expect from other applications that they use, we really needed to move to something new. When we conducted the LMS review – that was 2021 when that finished – and we did a comprehensive campus-wide review of LMSes, the campus chose to stay with Blackboard with the assumption, the understanding that we were eventually moving to Ultra as part of that process. We can't guarantee that Blackboard will continue to support original forever, and so now is the right time for us to take our own choice to make the move instead of dragging out until the very last minute, as things continue to break in the original course view, because it's not going to be supported. So, making the transition to the more modern infrastructure that our students expect is the right thing for us to do for our students. Anything you want to add, Jason?

**J. Rhode:** That's good.

**S. Richter:** Did I miss any part of your question?

**E. Nesterov:** [inaudible]

**S. Richter:** Thank you.

**T. Atkins:** [inaudible]

**S. Richter:** Yes, absolutely.

**T. Atkins:** Okay. Related to that, if we have shells right now that are in the original course view, do we need to change all of those to Ultra right now or can we do that at a later date?

**S. Richter:** Anything that is currently in the original course view can stay in the original course view for archival purposes. The next time that you would teach that course, you would need to be able to teach it in the Ultra Course View. But courses from the fall 2017 semester through now are in Blackboard still. We retain courses for five academic years. Those will all stay in the course view that they were originally taught in; we're not changing anything over. The shells that you have right now will stay as they are as well.



**J. Rhode:** Thank you. So, that granular course copy that Stephanie was talking about will continue to work even after the spring and beyond. So, you might still have those older courses in original and let's say next fall you're teaching a course and you want to go back and take some of that content from original and move it into Ultra, you'll still be able to do that at that point.

**T. Atkins:** One thing, and I know this is beyond your control, Blackboard asks you for your [inaudible] gradebook [inaudible] so much more difficult. That is not an improvement at all on what we had before. I figured it out now, but it's still really, really difficult. If they restored the old grade book system, I'd be [inaudible]

**S. Richter:** I appreciate the feedback, and I'd love to talk more another time about what specifically you're experiencing so I can give more detailed feedback to them. I will say that assessments in the gradebook and the grading process, in particular, have been one of their areas of focus. In fact, in the beginning of August, so brand new for this fall semester, there is an entirely new grading work flow that they're calling flexible grading, that is just in its infancy. So, it is a new system for grading that will continue to develop, as well, based on feedback. And that was why I connected one of our own instructional faculty with Blackboard to give her feedback as she started grading this fall semester. She had some great insight about some of the quirks to the new system that she was finding, and we'll continue to gather that feedback and share it with them.

**B. Creed:** All right, thank you both so much. And as we transition to the next item, I just want to quickly let everyone know that this will be one of those opportunities to get you all's feedback. At our next Faculty Senate meeting, you'll have a survey, and there'll be more information coming about that, about what's working for you, what obstacles and challenges remain, and what sort of supports you're hoping to see to support that transition.

B. Vice Provost for Academic Affairs – Curriculum Updates  
Alicia Schatteman, Vice Provost for Academic Affairs

**B. Creed:** Next up, item B., we have a presentation from Provost for Academic Affairs Alicia Schatteman about curriculum updates.

**A. Schatteman:** Thank you, everyone. A couple of things as we begin the new academic year. These are all of the offices that report into my particular unit. You probably don't interact with all of them; you may have interacted with them over a period of time. So, any time you have feedback, any time you want to chat about what these services are or what they provide, please reach out. They touch almost all of our undergraduate students, so that's just something to keep in mind as we start this new semester.

A couple of the priorities as we move into this semester, and me into this new role, is really creating and supporting a student-centered campus, improving financial support for students on campus, supporting teaching and learning, degree completion initiatives, which you'll hear a little about today, supporting career success, and then building this new collaborative team.

In terms of communication, Laurie mentioned the newsletter. There will be other things coming out that we want to highlight all the work that's going on in these particular units. We're looking to create a student advisory committee, so I'll be reaching out to your colleges. If you have a student advisory committee in your college, maybe soliciting some of those folks to participate with us.

Some plans around curriculum, student recruitment and support services. In terms of curriculum, I think it was Amanda and I were here last semester to talk about the work flow of how curriculum works here at NIU. It really starts at the college level, moves through various committees and eventually ends up at the Baccalaureate Council. But we also have these two subcommittees at work, one being the General Education Committee and the other being the CIUAE [Committee for the Improvement of the Undergraduate Experience].

In terms of the BC, our authority in the BC comes from Faculty Senate. So, you'll be hearing more about the BC as we go through the semester, but just know that that's a place you can participate and that the chair of that will be Amanda Ferguson going into this new year. This is her last term; she has told me this – this is her last term. So, if you happen to have representatives that serve on the BC from your college, we are going to try a little bit of a chair elect position this year to overlap with Amanda, so you can learn the ropes as we go through this new year.

This committee that has the really long name [Committee for the Improvement of the Undergraduate Academic Experience]. It is also a standing committee of the Baccalaureate Council. You might have heard they've done a lot with evaluating teaching awards – this committee has been mainly focused on. We have a new chair coming in this year, so you'll hear a little bit more about this committee over this next year. We hope to improve the reporting between this committee and the BC, for example.

General Education Committee – This will be a pretty active group and has been for the last couple of years. We elect the chair at the first meeting, and these folks will meet the third week of September, so we don't have a new chair designated yet. But they really are, again, advisory to the BC. They monitor and evaluate our general education program, make suggestions. We also approve additions to our general education curriculum, sometimes removals by request and generally oversee the program.

A couple of the things that the General Education Committee will be working on this year is really coming up with our philosophy of general education at NIU. It's not really articulated anywhere what we expect the general education to provide here at NIU. Part of that is assessment. We'll be working on a new assessment plan for the general education program here. We did a little bit of work with aligning our general education courses with the knowledge domains last year; some of that will continue. We have to make a decision, or would like to make a decision, on the pathways. So, if you have any insight, input you want to have about the pathways, the use of them, the lack of use of them, please communicate to your representatives on the BC and the GEC so, as we have those conversations, we'll start to think through that.

See if we can support innovative curriculum development with our gen ed programs in particular. Looking at maybe partnering with CITL offering some innovative teaching opportunities to work

with our faculty. A lot of our instructors teach our general education courses, our GAs teach those courses. So, maybe doing some faculty workshops or a conference.

So, this is the big long list for how you get stuff approved in terms of our curriculum – where it originates. And why I present this here is because we're moving to a digital platform to help us with this. Right now, it varies by college how this is done, but it's pretty much a manual process, sharing of Word documents and Excel files between committees and among various faculty members.

We purchased Curriculog; that is the attachment to Acalog, which is our online catalog, and that company, Modern Campus, offers this as an add-on. What this does then is really streamline the process for curriculum submissions and approvals, so we no longer have to share all those files and team sites and everything else. It's been purchased, but we're rolling this out slowly over the next year, which means we will still have the manual process that we have traditionally had here at NIU, and we'll start to introduce some new things.

We have just hired a new curriculum coordinator and catalog editor. He will be joining us in a couple of weeks. He will be primarily responsible for laying out this design and how we're going to go about implementation. But we will have a small implementation team that will be working with the folks at Modern Campus to do that. Modern Campus does a discovery phase meaning: How does this work in your college? I know in the College of Business, for example, they have two curriculum committees, one for grad, one for undergrad. Other colleges maybe you only have the one committee. Who gets those approvals? Who's on those committees? Who's the administrator in each of those colleges.

So, that discovery phase will take place this fall. We'll start to create forms and workflows. All of this can be customized, so we'll work with Curriculog on how to do that. And then we'll have pilot test training going on. So, we'll use a set of data that people can go in and play with a little bit. We'll train your college curriculum administrators, whether that's a staff or associate dean, and then we'll gather feedback so that by the spring we're ready to build out the system particular for NIU, start to create training materials, guidelines with our deans, curriculum committees. And so by the end of spring next year, we hope that implementation will be complete, because some of our colleges start to take in their curriculum proposals in the summer. And so, we want to then start to use this system come this summer.

In terms of student recruitment, we're working on several new things as it relates to curriculum. Really focused on transfer friendly initiatives, so working with our community college partnerships; I'll talk more about some of that. We're looking at prior learning credit, who's doing it on campus, what are some opportunities for us to be able to do those things. We're working on a proposal called Back to the Pack with the Division of Finance to figure out what we can do about some of our students who maybe stopped out at NIU and would return, but they have some balances owing to NIU. And how could we incentivize them to come back by working on a scholarship program, something like that that's particular to NIU.

We're also working on other opportunities to attract students that are coming back. We have two re-enrollment counselors at the Academic Advising Center, who are working with students who stopped out within the last year. And then we're also working with a company called ReUp, and they will be reaching out to students who have stopped out longer than a year to try to figure out why those individuals stopped out and if we can attract them back.

These are some of our top transfer institution that we're focusing our energies on. Some of these community colleges we already have existing partnerships. Some we're creating new ones. So, you'll see McHenry County up there is tied for second place. We have a new partnership with them that will be launching in fall of '24, although the work has started now. These are the five programs. Primarily, these discussions have taken place with the associate deans, with the deans of each of these colleges, and now we're moving into the chairs. So, if you're from one of these programs, you'll be hearing more from us about the pathways to be offered at McHenry County. If anyone's familiar, during COVID, Aurora University sold off their Woodstock campus, and McHenry County College purchased that Woodstock campus, and they are converting that into a university center.

Some student support services – lots of things going on around that. We're looking at the first year experience and everything from application all the way through student orientation, if anybody attended Week of Welcome, all of that packaged together. That's really important so that we can support them in their new home.

Trying to support efforts as we become a Hispanic Serving Institution. We're very close, you'll see numbers shortly, but we're very close to that. What does that mean, though? Because a percentage is just a percentage, but what does that mean for NIU?

Support Learning Commons in Founders Library – If you haven't ventured over to the library in a while, the first floor is really student focused. We have a number of our services there, the Huskie Academic Success Center, that's tutoring and another writing center, and all those folks are also over there. And we're looking at trying to find external funding to support some of this student support work, particularly as it relates to closing equity gaps.

Huskie First Survey – If you're a chair, you would have gotten this, or if you're a dean. This should have been distributed from your chairs. This is a survey that is done from all of our students. Deadline is September 10. Hopefully, you've seen that. If not, let them know that you heard about it here, and share it with your students. What that does is let us know what services, supports that those students need. And then we do individual outreach to those students.

First Year Advising – You probably heard it rolled out this past summer. It was started about a year ago. We do now have centralized advising for about half of our incoming freshman class. And there were three goals: To increase student satisfaction with entering the university overall; increase student retention and progress; and to provide our academic advisors with more professional development and training. We'll come back and articulate how we've done on these three goals. We've had one summer under our belts. The goal was to serve as many students as we can with an experience that would introduce them to NIU broadly. So, these students right now – again we serve about 50 percent of incoming freshmen.

We also have seen a lot more students that are coming in with AP and dual credit, and that seems to be growing over time. So, we're trying to make some adjustments to that as we look into the summer. Next Friday, Sept. 15, your college advisors, as well as centralized advisors, will be attending an advising summit that we've put together to share some of this information of what worked, what didn't work, this summer, and how to plan out next summer.

The reason a lot of folks were very for this centralized advising model is we know a number of our students leave the original major that they entered in and also may leave the college. And so, that was the goal, to try to introduce them to everything that NIU has so that, if they're not happy in whatever major they chose or whatever college, we keep them here and we retain them here at NIU. So, we'll report back on how that's going over the year.

This is the Huskie First survey. Again, this is the slide that was shared with your chairs. So, if you really want to promote it to your students, it's helpful if as many students as possible can take this. The survey is open until September 10.

Also, just to keep on your radar, I'll be sending this out to your chairs, but we do need faculty to sit on the IBHE Articulation Initiative. This was created a few years ago to make that more seamless transition between community colleges and our public four-year institutions here in Illinois. We do need several faculty to serve on these panels. I'm meeting with them later this week to figure out exactly what the work requirement is, so don't everybody put your hand up right this minute, which I know you're not. I'll let you know what the work requirements are. It is a three-year commitment, so keep that in mind. Not every public sits on every review board, etc. But NIU has obligated itself to sit on certain ones. If you're in art, biology, elementary or secondary education, or maybe humanities or fine arts, this might show up in your chair's office, and you might be asked to serve. I'm getting more information about what the work requirement is, and I'll keep you posted on that.

And that is all the curriculum updates, but I'm happy to take any questions.

**S. Vahabzadeh:** [inaudible] A major concern that we have found when we talk to them is faculty [inaudible] for specific courses that we have in the department and also not having enough [inaudible] and tutors. What are your plans for that, because right now we have classes of 50 students with labs, homework assignments [inaudible] and we only have a TA for ten hours. So, when this happens, majority of the load will again go back to faculty. And with the course loads that we see, if we have less course load, we can serve the students better. So, I want to know what are the plans moving forward. Thank you.

**A. Schatteman:** I don't know. I would say that we are very aware of how our graduate enrollment and how our graduate assignments of graduate teaching assistantships affect our teaching. That's what I can say. Laurie, do you want to jump in?

**L. Elish-Piper:** Each of the colleges is different in terms of how they operationalize load. For our faculty, we have two unions if they're instructors or tenured/tenure-track faculty, and so that provides some parameters. But many of those decisions really are made at a local level in terms of looking at how to best utilize those resources. I would encourage you to take that back to the department and/or college level to have those conversations and figure out how to address those

concerns, because we don't assign load centrally. Load is assigned at the department level with the department chair. And so, I would recommend having those conversations at that level. If there are questions that a department or a college has, we'd certainly be happy to sit down and talk about how to look at those data and some different ways you might do the planning. But those decisions are made locally, so I would encourage that to be taken back to the local level.

**A. Schatteman:** Other questions?

**S. Vahabzadeh:** Just to add to the point that you mentioned, this happened in our college meeting that we had a faculty who mentioned in summer he had a course with 30-something students. And according to the number of the enrollment, the money that was given for the registration was around \$70-something thousand. The faculty was paid \$6500, and there was no TA. So, this was something that was respected in the course evaluation. And these are the [inaudible] that was taken. It was brought to me, and I was asked to bring it up in the Faculty Senate. Thank you.

**L. Elish-Piper:** Summer is funded differently than fall and spring. In summer, centrally out of the Division of Academic Affairs, funding is given to each college based on summer enrollment trends from previous summers, as well as what they've identified as courses that need to be offered in the summer. The amount that each college gets is really commensurate with the amount of teaching, the amount of credit hours they're going to be generating in the summer. We're going down a rabbit hole here, but let me try. We have a budget model where the money for tuition and fees flows centrally. It does not go directly to the department or college, nor does it come directly to Academic Affairs. It goes centrally, and then Academic Affairs receives an allocation, and then Academic Affairs divides up that allocation out to the colleges and to the other units like the ones that Alicia listed on the slide earlier. And so, there is not a direct amount if we enroll ten or 100 more students, that that amount of money comes to Academic Affairs or that amount of money comes specifically to the college or the department. And so, it's kind of an interesting budget model in that regard. But that's the structure that we've had for many years, and it's the current budget structure that we have. Really, your question is based on that general model, but more specifically the summer model. So, for the summer funding, it's based on an enrollment amount if a local unit wanted to use some of its additional resources to hire a graduate assistant or to hire an additional instructor or, in looking at the course cap, decides to split that into two sections, those decisions could be made locally. But that's kind of a high-level understanding of what that looks like. I'd be happy to have a more in depth conversation about that. But, just at a high level, that's how the structure goes.

As we work into multi-year budgeting, George Middlemist and I will be coming and talking more about that later this fall. So, we'll be able to do a deeper dive, not necessarily into that question, but into budgeting, in general, because I think there's a lot of confusion or a lot of incomplete information about what the budget looks like. So, George and I are really going to try and provide more of an overview of what the structure looks like and then what the opportunities are moving forward in terms of multi-year budgeting planning, so that, if we knew, for example, that we needed to have more TAs in certain kinds of spaces, we could do that planning and building the budget, rather than right now we basically receive an allocation and have to figure out how to operate within that allocation. So, I think the multi-year budget planning will allow us to be more strategic and intentional and, hopefully, in that process allow us to be able to make better decisions.

Another piece of your equation is that course caps – again course caps are not set centrally – course caps are set locally. So, if there are particular courses that require additional support for students because students really struggle or they're a heavy conceptual load for students in those courses and they need a lot more support. Or we've seen that we have high DFW rates in particular courses and we need to really think about teaching differently so that we can do more hands on or more small group. Or we can really provide more focused and supportive instruction for students. Those course caps are also set locally, so that's another opportunity to really look at how a program is taking in that feedback. In your particular case, if students weren't getting the support they needed, maybe those course caps need to be looked at. Or, in terms of how the curriculum is delivered, maybe there are opportunities to really rethink how that course might be taught to support student success.

That's kind of a broad ranging answer to your question, but I'd be happy to follow up in depth if you'd like to reach out.

**B. Creed:** Not seeing any other questions, thank you so much.

C. Faculty Personnel Advisor – Introduction –  
Carrie Kortegast  
Associate Professor, Department of Counseling, Adult and Higher Education  
and Faculty Personnel Advisor

**B. Creed:** And our next presentation is going to be from our faculty personnel advisor, Carrie Kortegast. She's on her way up.

**C. Kortegast:** Good afternoon, thank you for giving me a little bit of time today to share a little bit about the faculty personnel advisor position. I have been serving in this position since last November, and it's been such an honor to be here and to be able to serve all of our faculty at NIU. When I applied for the position, one of the things I said is I wanted to do outreach, and I wanted to talk about ways in which we can make the position better known throughout the colleges and at NIU.

A little bit about me. I am an associate professor in the Department of Counseling and Higher Education. I teach on the higher education part. My background is in student affairs administration. I also tell my friends and family I teach about college students and how colleges and universities work. And I share that, because that helps inform some of the ways I think about this position. It also helps inform some of my knowledge and background between my professional experience, as well as my experience in my ninth year at NIU, serving on DPC, serving on college council, as well as other leadership positions or service positions across NIU.

The faculty personnel advisor position is open to all faculty regardless of rank, role, etc. And really I provide confidential resources; I can provide assistance in navigating and strategizing issues folks might have. As the name implies, it is really focused on being an advisor around personnel issues related to faculty.

I also provide a yearly report – and you can look that up from last year – with some observations, as well as some of the work that was done during my timeframe last year.

I believe Pat included a handout – basically, it’s the slide. I would like you to please share that with faculty in your department. Please pass that around. Please encourage folks that, if they are experiencing something that they want to get some advice on, if they want help to talk through an issue that they’re having that is related to personnel, that there is somebody on campus. And that I can also help them connect to other resources. I can help them strategize. But mostly I also think I provide a listening ear.

Thank you for a little bit of time. I don’t want to take up a lot of time. If anyone has a question, I’m happy to answer it. And if you’re interested in more information, please reach out to me.

**B. Creed:** Thanks so much, Carrie. Are there any questions?

**C. Kortegast:** Cool. Share it around.

**B. Creed:** Thank you so much.

## **IX. CONSENT AGENDA**

- A. Approve Department of Management Professor Sarah Marsh to serve as the 2023-24 Faculty Senate vice president per FS Bylaws, Article 2.2.
- B. Approve Department of Communication Professor Ferald Bryan to serve as the 2023-24 Faculty Senate parliamentarian per FS Bylaws, Article 2.2.
- C. Approve the 2023-24 Faculty Senate standing committee membership rosters per FS Bylaws, Article 3
- D. Approve the 2023-24 University Advisory Committee to the Board of Trustees membership roster, confirming Larissa Garcia for a three-year term, and Katy Jaekel as Larissa Garcia’s alternate for the fall 2023 semester per NIU Bylaws, Article 8.4.1.1
- E. Approve faculty candidates running unopposed to serve on committees of the university
- F. Approve Professor George Slotsve to serve as NIU’s academic representative to the State Universities Retirement System Members Advisory Committee (SURSMAC) for the 2023-24 academic year.
- G. Approve Professor Sarah Marsh to serve on the 2024 BOT Professorship Award Selection Committee.

**B. Creed:** That brings us to item IX of the agenda, which is the Consent Agenda. The consent agenda, as you can see in your packet, includes approving Sarah Marsh to serve as the 2023-24 Faculty Senate vice president; approval of Ferald Bryan to serve as our Faculty Senate parliamentarian for 2023-24; approval of the 2023-24 Faculty Senate standing committee



membership rosters; approving the 2023-24 University Advisory Committee to the Board of Trustees membership roster, which includes confirming Larissa Garcia for a three-year term, with Katy Jaekel serving as Larissa Garcia's alternate for this fall semester. It includes the approval of faculty candidates running unopposed to serve on committees of the university; the approval of George Slotsve to serve as NIU's academic representative to the State Universities Retirement System Members Advisory Committee; and finally, to approve Professor Sarah Marsh to serve on the 2024 Board of Trustees Professorship Award Selection Committee.

Can I have a motion to approve the consent agenda? All right, Pete Chomentowski and then David Valentiner is the second. All in favor, say aye.

**Members:** Aye.

**B. Creed:** All opposed? All right, thank you. We have approved the consent agenda, and this really does help populate our committees and ensure we can do the needed work for this year.

## **X. REPORTS FROM COUNCILS, BOARDS AND STANDING COMMITTEES**

- A. Faculty Advisory Council to the IBHE – report  
Linda Saborío, NIU representative to FAC-IBHE

**B. Creed:** Moving on to item X, which are Reports from Councils, Boards and Standing Committees, the first report we have is from the Faculty Advisory Council to the IBHE. And that's from Linda Saborío.

**L. Saborío:** Good afternoon. At this first Faculty Senate meeting, I'd like to take this opportunity to present myself and introduce you to the FAC and some of the work we do. I'm Professor Saborío, and I am an associate professor of Spanish and Latin American literature in the Department of World Languages and Cultures. I have served as NIU's representative to the FAC for, I think it's been five years, but I can neither confirm or deny that. I think Pat probably can, though.

The Faculty Advisory Council is a representative group of faculty in the state of Illinois that acts as an advisory group to the Illinois Board of Higher Education. It has 36 members. We have 12 representatives from each of the 12 public institutions, 12 representatives from the private and proprietary institutions and 12 representatives from the public community colleges. The proprietary and community colleges serve on a rotating basis, so four years.

We meet on the third Friday of every month unless it falls on a holiday. We don't meet on Thanksgiving. Our meeting is all day from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., and we generally are very busy that entire day. We meet in our caucus groups so the public will meet, the privates, and then the two-years, to discuss a variety of issues pertaining to higher education. And then we also have working groups that depends on the needs of the council and sometimes from requests from the IBHE. In the past, we've had working groups, for example, on faculty and student mental health, student debt and affordability, and higher education funding.

Our first meeting is September 15 down at IVCC; we do meet at a different institution every month. It calls for a lot of traveling on my part, so sometimes you'll hear some really colorful stories about being in the middle of nowhere in Illinois. So, yes, our first meeting is on the 15<sup>th</sup>, and then I will report out to you every month what it is that we discussed.

Any questions for me, let me know. And also, if you have ideas, maybe something that you would like for us to consider on the council, maybe there's a certain policy at the state level that you'd like for us to take a look at, do some research on, just let me know and I'd be more than happy to take a look at those for you. Thank you.

**B. Creed:** Thank you.

- B. University Advisory Committee to the Board of Trustees – report  
Felicia Bohanon, Natasha Johnson, Ben Creed  
Larissa Garcia (Katy Jaekel fall 2023 alternate), Karen Whedbee, Brad Cripe

**B. Creed:** Moving on to item B, the University Advisory Committee to the Board of Trustees. I'll be giving that report, and there are other members of the UAC – I see Natasha is here – if they want to add anything else, please feel free at the end.

The Board of Trustees met on August 24, and the Board of Trustees meetings might not seem like really exciting meetings to attend, but I think there is a lot that goes on in those rooms, and they're all available to be attended virtually. If you have interest in seeing what happens in those meetings, I highly recommend picking one and listening in for 30 or 40 minutes; there are usually some interesting things going on that pertain to our university here and that are relevant.

The main topics were discussed in their three main subcommittees.

The Academic Affairs, Student Affairs and Personnel Subcommittee shared status updates on the search for the dean of the College of Business, including the use of an external search firm. There was a discussion of the changes that were submitted to IBHE, program changes. The list of faculty who retired in fiscal year '23 and who were granted emeritus status for fiscal year '24 were recognized. And the vice president for student affairs, Clint-Michael Reneau, summarized the work from Student Affairs that his office has been engaged in related to engagement and retention. They also discussed the Braven First Year Program, as well as Greek life revitalization efforts.

The Research, Innovation, Legal and Legislative Affairs Committee received state and federal reports, so there are always updates on what's happening at the state and federal level that NIU should be aware of. Related to those updates, there was a presentation by general counsel, Bryan Perry, that was related to the recent Supreme Court case that banned the use of race in university admissions processes. It was really compelling and provided updates as to how it will impact NIU. The main story, as I understood it, was nothing will fundamentally change. We are already ahead of that. We're not using race in our admissions processes. But there will be more presentations to this

group and information rolling out related to that. The vice provost of RIPS, Yvonne Harris, shared the report from the Sponsored Projects Administration. And the last item that was presented in this subgroup was from the director of the Institute for the Study of the Environment, Sustainability and Energy, Thomas Skuzinski, about sustainable development.

The third and final subcommittee of the Board of Trustees is the Finance, Audit, Compliance, Facilities and Operations Committee. As I said, these are rip-roaring names, but trust me, the information and the conversations, I think, are really relevant and useful to engage with. The first part of that committee was a presentation by CFO George Middlemist about the university's financial position, as well as updates on the financial statement audit, as well as activities that NIU will be taking based on that audit. There were presentations on the university's net assets and working capital showing a decline, but this was due to refinancing and impacts of COVID. But there is also good news where the university's long-term debt is expected to fall by \$6.2 million. Moody's has updated our credit rating, which is a good thing. But then some things that are actionable that may impact some of your departments is that the board approved the anticipated expenses for participation in a college bowl game, so we'll be ready to go when that happens. They approved a heat exchanger for one of our buildings to update the HVAC system. And then the College of Business entered into a new contract with Miles Education as a recruitment strategy for their accountancy program. And the final thing was an update on the future Health Informatics Technology Center that gave us kind of a timeline and opportunities to see what that can look like as it comes to pass.

Again, I do recommend folks popping in once and while. I don't know if anybody else had anything to add to that report? Natasha is shaking her head.

C. Faculty Rights and Responsibilities Committee – no report

D. Social Justice Committee – no report

**B. Creed:** Items C and D, there are no reports from the Faculty Rights and Responsibilities Committee or from the Social Justice Committee at this time.

E. FS-UC Rules, Governance and Elections Committee – report  
Emily McKee, FS/RGE Liaison/Spokesperson

**B. Creed:** Item E from the Faculty Senate-University Council Rules, Governance and Elections Committee. Emily McKee is unable to make it but was able to share a report with me to share with you all.

1. Election of 2023-24 Hearing Panel – A Qualtrics ballot will be distributed to FS tenured/tenure-track voting members following the meeting.

**B. Creed:** The first item within that report that I want to call your attention to is the election of the 2023-24 Hearing Panel. That Hearing Panel is used for appeals based on Faculty Senate Bylaws, Article 10.3 regarding due process for faculty dismissal issues, and also for review of allegations regarding violation of academic freedom based on Faculty Senate Bylaws, Article 14. For this

election, a Qualtrics ballot will be used, and Pat will email that ballot following this meeting, along with directions for completing it. The ballot will contain the names of 34 tenured faculty members selected randomly, and you will be asked to vote for no more than 20 of them. So, you'll see that after this meeting.

2. Election of 2023-24 non-union faculty and staff grievance pool – A Qualtrics ballot will be distributed to FS tenured/tenure-track voting members following the meeting.

**B. Creed:** The second item – we were asked to identify three tenured, non-union faculty members to serve on the 2023-24 pool for non-union faculty and staff grievances, from which a grievance committee could be created, should one be needed to review a non-union faculty or staff grievance. SPS Council and Operating Staff Council also are selecting their own three representatives each to serve in this grievance pool through their respective processes. For this selection of three faculty members, a Qualtrics ballot will be used, as well, and Pat will email that ballot following this meeting, along with directions for completing it. The ballot will contain the names of ten randomly selected tenured, non-union faculty members, and you will be asked to vote for three.

- F. Student Government Association – report  
Olivia Newman, SGA President  
Cole Hensley, Speaker of the Senate

**B. Creed:** All right, now we'll move on to the Student Government Association. Are there any members of the Student Government Association present? It doesn't look like it, so, with no rep, I assume no report.

- G. Operating Staff Council – report  
Natasha Johnson, President

**B. Creed:** We will move on to Operating Staff Council. I saw Natasha, do you have a report?

**N. Johnson:** Hi, everybody. I'll take the time to also introduce myself. I'm the newly elected Operating Staff Council president, and so, I represent just over 1,300 Civil Service employees. We are also working on communication this year and, with that, we sent out in our newsletter a link for our priorities so we can gather what all the Civil Service employees what matters most to them, so we can represent them accordingly. So, the second of six newsletters have already gone out, because there are six for the year. Once we get more feedback, because we want more feedback, so we can do things the right way, we also want to be transparent with things that are going on as we're able. Once we get that information back, we'll be sharing with all the constituency groups to let them know what we're going to be doing for the year. That's pretty much our report. We will be doing the Council of Councils, we're hosting this year. That will be September 10, and we'll have it at the Barsema Alumni and Visitors Center, so that's where we'll be for that. And then we also are hosting the EAC group the night before. So, the people who were invited to that, they've already gotten their information. And that's what we have going on. Thanks, everybody.

**B. Creed:** Thank you, Natasha.

- H. Supportive Professional Staff Council – report  
Felicia Bohanon, President

**B. Creed:** Item H is Supportive Professional Staff Council report. Do we have a report?

**J. Boswell:** No report.

**B. Creed:** Thank you.

## **XI. INFORMATION ITEMS**

**B. Creed:** Now we're on to agenda item XI, Informational Items. If you could please take a look through these items as they interest you. There are links to the minutes from various councils, committees and other meetings.

- A. [Policy Library](#) – Comment on Proposed Policies
- B. [Minutes](#), Academic Planning Council
- C. [Minutes](#), Athletic Board
- D. [Minutes](#), Baccalaureate Council
- E. [Minutes](#), Board of Trustees
- F. [Minutes](#), Campus Security and Environmental Quality Committee
- G. [Minutes](#), Comm. on the Improvement of the Undergraduate Academic Experience
- H. [Minutes](#), General Education Committee
- I. [Minutes](#), Graduate Council
- J. [Minutes](#), Honors Committee
- K. [Minutes](#), Operating Staff Council
- L. [Minutes](#), Supportive Professional Staff Council
- M. [Minutes](#), University Assessment Panel
- N. [Minutes](#), University Benefits Committee
- O. [Minutes](#), Univ. Comm. on Advanced and Nonteaching Educator License Programs
- P. [Minutes](#), University Committee on Initial Educator Licensure
- Q. [2022-23 Annual Reports](#)

**B. Creed:** I'd like to draw your attention to items Q through T at the bottom. Item Q are the annual reports, including Carrie Kortegast's report that she mentioned earlier, as well as other reports from a select group of committees.

- R. 2023-24 FS schedule: Sep 6, Oct 4, Nov 1, Nov 29, Jan 24, Feb 21, Mar 27, Apr 24

**B. Creed:** The upcoming Faculty Senate schedule is listed in item R, so, if you're curious about when those dates are that you all are signed up for, they're there, and I know Pat's communicated them, as well.

- S. [University Benefits Committee](#) – seeking one tenured/tenure-track faculty member of Faculty Senate to serve on this committee, which meets virtually on the first Thursday of the month at 1 p.m. Contact Pat Erickson at [pje@niu.edu](mailto:pje@niu.edu) if you can help.

**B. Creed:** The next item, which would be S, we are seeking one tenured/tenure-track faculty member of Faculty Senate to serve on the University Benefits Committee, and please contact Pat if you are willing to serve on this important committee.

- T. Annual call for [honorary doctoral degree nominations](#); materials must be submitted by Friday, Oct. 27.

**B. Creed:** And finally, item T is a reminder about the annual call for honorary degree nominations. And those are the informational items.

## **XII. ADJOURNMENT**

**B. Creed:** And we'll move to item XII, which is adjournment. Can I have a motion to adjourn the meeting. Pete. And second from David Valentiner. All in favor?

**Members:** Aye.

**B. Creed:** Thank you all so much for a great first meeting.

Meeting adjourned at 4:05 p.m.