

TRANSCRIPT

FACULTY SENATE

Wednesday, October 4, 2023, 3 p.m.

Altgeld Hall Auditorium, 2nd Floor

Northern Illinois University

DeKalb, Illinois

VOTING MEMBERS PRESENT: Arado, Atkins, Barrett, Bohanon, Books, Boswell, Brain, Campbell, Chomentowski, Coulter (for Rossetti), Creed, Demir, Duffin, Finch, Fotovat, Guzman, Harris, Hartenhoff, Ito, Johnson, Jong, Kim, Lampi, Liberty, Luo, Marsh, Martinez, McGowan, McKee, Mellon, Morris (for Geisler), Naples, Nyunt, Porter, Qin, Rajabi, Ross, Salehinia (for Vahabzadeh), Salimi, Scanlon, Sharp, Sirotkin, Slotsve, Staikidis, Swedlow, Vahedian, Valentiner, Van Wienen, Wang, Whedbee, Xie

VOTING MEMBERS ABSENT: Graves, Nesterov, Rossetti, Vaezi, Vahabzadeh

OTHERS PRESENT: Bryan, Elish-Piper, Falkoff, González, Hughes, Olson, Paquette, Saborío, Sumner, Swingley

OTHERS ABSENT: Cripe, Ferguson, Jaekel

I. CALL TO ORDER

B. Creed: It's about 3:01, so I'll call to order the October 4 Faculty Senate meeting. Thank you all for joining us today.

II. VERIFICATION OF QUORUM

B. Creed: Pat, can you verify that we have a quorum?

P. Erickson: We do have a quorum, and I want to share my usual reminder. Please fill out the attendance sheet at your table and just leave it there; we'll collect them after the meeting. And if you want to make a comment or ask a question during the meeting, we really appreciate it if you can go to one of the microphones, and that just helps us out a lot. Thanks.

B. Creed: Great, thanks, Pat.

III. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

B. Creed: Can I have a motion to adopt the agenda for today's meeting? Motion from Valentiner. A second from Marsh. Any discussion? Can we have a vote – all in favor of adopting the agenda, please say aye.

Members: Aye.

B. Creed: Opposed? Abstentions? All right, the agenda is approved.

IV. APPROVAL OF THE SEPTEMBER 6, 2023, MINUTES

B. Creed: The next item is a motion to approve the minutes of the September 6, 2023, Faculty Senate meeting. Can I have a motion to approve the minutes? Johnson, first; Chomentowski, second. Any discussion, corrections, deletions? All in favor of approving the September 6, 2023, minutes, please say aye.

Members: Aye.

B. Creed: Opposed? Any abstentions? Thank you, the minutes are approved.

V. PUBLIC COMMENT

B. Creed: Next item up is public comment. Pat, do we have any requests for public comment?

P. Erickson: No public comment today.

VI. FACULTY SENATE PRESIDENT'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

B. Creed: Item VI is Faculty Senate President's Announcements. I just want to say thank you to all those, who did complete the survey about the transition to Blackboard Ultra. At the start of this meeting, we had over 35 responses, so I appreciate your willingness to go back to your constituents and bring back those perspectives. We've got representation from all colleges, except for one. We also have feedback from our tenured and tenure-track faculty, instructors, clinical faculty, as well as even one center have shared their perspectives on it. Overall, it does seem like the transition is going fairly well, and there is a belief that the training and supports from CITL that people have engaged with and been successful and high-quality. But that being said, there are some consistent challenges that have been raised up by the Faculty Senate, and those are ones that I will be sharing with Jason and Stephanie and others at CITL as they work to implement Ultra as the only option by spring 2024. Some of those issues that I'll be raising with them are the process to transfer courses, finding ways to support the use and transfer of rubrics and other accreditation tools and features. And then there are also some supports that were asked for that I will be talking to them about how we can best support faculty, instructors in implementing that transition. And some of them are specific trainings, helping our students be prepared so that faculty don't have to serve as tech support or as experts from the student perspective, along with learning Ultra or implementing Ultra. And, as I said, I've already begun sharing this information with Jason and Stephanie, and I really

look forward to having this information to help me better engage with them around this work to make sure it's implemented. So, thank you for taking the time to answer the survey, and I think it will lead to action and further support for our teaching and for student engagement.

In an effort to continue building these channels of communication and the flow of information, one of the things that I'll be sharing, along with the summary update, after this meeting, is I'm going to be implementing Faculty Senate president office hours, an opportunity, I hope, to learn from you all about issues that are bubbling up, opportunities on campus that you see for Faculty Senate to get involved in or to improve processes. So, please look for that communication, and I do hope and welcome conversations with you all during that time.

And finally, I just wanted to end my announcements by calling attention to a recent announcement that came out about NIU being named one of only two Illinois institutions that were recognized among the best of the best for LGBTQ+ students, according to Campus Pride. That's a testament to the work of our faculty, our staff, to make our campus a welcoming place.

VII. PROVOST'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

B. Creed: That's the end of my announcements, which brings us to item VII, which are the Provost's Announcement. I'd like to invite Provost Elish-Piper up to the mic to share any announcements that she has.

L. Elish-Piper: Hi everybody. I have five quick announcements for you. The first one is about book adoptions. This fall semester, we experienced some problems with book adoptions that really impact student success and students getting off to the right start in their classes. I learned that many textbooks are printed on demand, which means that students can't request a book at the last minute and be able to get it into their hands. And so, in a meeting recently with the bookstore, we learned about the importance of these due dates for a couple of reasons that we already knew, but some new reasons, as well. For spring adoptions, textbooks should be ordered by October 27. I know that feels incredibly early, but because students are able to begin registering in early November, oftentimes, students make decisions based on text costs. And in addition to that, the bookstore needs to begin procuring books and ordering books and making sure that the print-on-demand books will be available when we need them. We know that some classes may not be assigned by that date; but for those that are assigned, we really want to encourage you and your colleagues to get those textbook orders in as soon as possible. So, October 27 is the target date. We had a lot of texts that were not ordered until about a week into the semester, and that makes it really challenging for students. So, I just wanted to pass that along.

I also want to share that, apparently, it's office hours day. So, Ben made his announcement about office hours. The next Academic Affairs newsletter, which will come out on Wednesday, so a week from today, I'll be announcing provost office hours. Those will be done virtually to make them more accessible to the broader community. So, when you see that newsletter, you'll see those dates and times. And if you're interested, or colleagues or students are interested, in having some time to sit down with me and talk about concerns, issues, suggestions, ideas, I'm happy to do that. So, just wanted to make sure that you knew to look for that.

Also want to let you know that this coming Monday is our first fall preview day, and we have over 1,000 perspective students and their families scheduled to be on our campus. So, if you're on campus on Monday, turn the lights on, open your doors, say hello, welcome people, encourage them if they're lost or have questions. I'm really excited – we've not had such a great number of people registering for these in the past, so it feels very encouraging as we look at building our class for fall of 2024.

Homecoming is coming up as well. You probably saw in NIU Today some of the announcements about events and also opportunities to volunteer. We encourage you and your colleagues to get involved and to enjoy homecoming. Certainly the game is part of the equation, but there are tons of other events in the week leading up to homecoming.

And finally, at the November Faculty Senate meeting, George Middlemist, our vice president for finance and administration and chief financial officer, and I will be co-presenting an update on budget. So, we wanted to let you know that that will definitely be at the November meeting.

Those are my announcements, thank you.

B. Creed: Thank you, Laurie.

VIII. ITEMS FOR FACULTY SENATE CONSIDERATION

- A. Faculty Affairs Priorities for this Academic Year
Bárbara González, Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs

B. Creed: On to agenda item VIII, Items for Faculty Senate Consideration. We have two presentations today. The first will be about faculty affairs priorities for this academic year by Bárbara González, our vice provost for faculty affairs.

B. González: Thank you, hello. It's a pleasure to be here at Faculty Senate, because my job is to remove barriers and help faculty succeed. One thing that I want to talk to you about is my priorities for this year. I know some of you have heard those in the college meetings, but I have a few things to update you on, and then I have a request for you.

My priorities this year, which align with the presidential goals, are belonging, retention and professional development of faculty. My initiatives are going to revolve around those things. To encourage a culture of belonging, I will prioritize initiatives of diversity, equity and inclusion, as well as initiatives to reduce sexual harassment and bullying, so you'll be hearing more about that from me.

We have already begun work to facilitate the hiring of a diverse group of faculty this year. I'm to provide mentoring opportunities across faculty members' careers, so one thing that we are doing is not focusing only on assistant professors, but also on faculty at various stages of their career. So,

keep your eyes open. We do have the Academic Affairs newsletter that I would encourage you and your colleagues to read. It has a lot of announcements about some of these opportunities that come around, so I would encourage you to keep an eye out for those in the newsletter; it comes out once a month.

I also wanted to let you know that the Faculty Senate Personnel Committee is currently working on promotion guidelines for clinical and research faculty. This is work that started last year and is continuing this year. They hope to bring that to the full senate some time during this academic year, so you should see that coming from them sometime soon – well not that soon, but sometime.

I'm going to ask you for something. I would like for you to go back to your constituents and ask them what my office or I could be doing to help faculty succeed. Is there something I'm not looking at. Is there something I'm forgetting or is there a concern or a hope that you or your constituents would want to see. I really want to know, because if I don't know, it's very hard for me to do it. I would really hope that you will reach out to me with ideas or hopes and dreams, and concerns as well; if something is not working, I would also want to hear about it.

Thank you. Any questions? Thank you.

B. Creed: Thank you very much.

- B. Mental Health Early Action on Campus Act – Update
Tim Paquette, Director of Counseling and Consultative Services
Kelly Olson, AVP Student Development and Dean of Students

B. Creed: The next item up for Faculty Senate consideration is an update on the Mental Health Early Action on Campus Act, brought to us by Kelly Olson and Tim Paquette. You're welcome to come up.

T. Paquette: Good afternoon, everyone. I am Dr. Tim Paquette, the director of Counseling and Consultation Services at NIU. For those who don't know, and I hope that's not too many of you, CCS is the designated student mental health counseling center on campus as part of the Division of Student Affairs, with our mission to provide mental health support to only currently enrolled NIU students.

K. Olson: Hello, good afternoon. I'm Kelly Olson. I serve as our assistant vice president for Student Affairs and our dean of students. And so, I have the pleasure of getting to work with our wonderful Dr. Paquette and the counseling staff and just our overall resources on campus, of how do we support students and how do we identify students to support. We are ecstatic to be here today. We are just really grateful for the opportunity to be able to talk about what we call the MHEAC grant and some of our updates that we have about that.

T. Paquette: Thought it would be good just to make sure that we're all on the same page as we get started – some might not know some of the details about the Mental Health Early Action on Campus Act. This provides some summary information about how it was introduced to the state legislature actually four years ago now, but the pandemic and other factors have impacted the

implementation of MHEAC requirements for all public universities, coming from the spirit of how are we trying to fill gaps and meet mental health needs of students in a variety of ways. The general consensus that we all know is that the counseling center cannot just be the only place where that is happening, and so how are we meeting different requirements around peer-to-peer support, training, awareness, availability of resources, expansion of resources where possible, to be able to fill those gaps. And so, this is the MHEAC requirements for all public two- and four-year colleges and universities in the state of Illinois.

K. Olson: I just want to provide a little bit of perspective of the funding for this. As Tim indicated, the pandemic impacted the grant; and so, when this grant first happened, it was like a lot of other unfunded mandates that we have as a public institution. And so, we have been reporting on our efforts around this since 2019, but we'd never had funding for it. And so, a lot of our efforts were around: what do we already have on campus, how could we look at things a little bit differently, how can we be creative, to really have the spirit of the act, but, unfortunately, without the funding.

In March 2023, we received our first funding on this, and it was a little bit of a surprise. And it gave us about three months to implement what we wanted to do with it. You'll see where we had our quick deadline; and then, luckily, for FY24, they have also funded us. But I think what's important is that, as we were reporting on this grant, we were also reporting what our ideal budget would be for what this grant means, what the mandate looks like. So, we proposed to the state closer to \$400,000 to do what we thought was best for our campus. And so, I just wanted to put that in perspective, because while we're incredibly grateful for the support of the state of Illinois, it's not exactly giving us enough to do with what we think could be possible for our campus.

T. Paquette: And that sounds familiar, right, to everyone in this room, especially when we all have our own priorities, our own initiatives that we know are so important, and it comes back to resources, both human and financial resources, about how to best implement things, and in this situation, our efforts to meet these requirements.

What we wanted to highlight today is what we've already been doing and what our next steps are going to be. The amazing part about this initial funding that was so critical is that it allowed us to focus immediately on ways that we can expand peer-to-peer support here at NIU – something that's already in place in different places across campus, but for the purposes of the act, being able to provide peer-to-peer mental health support, not counseling, peer-to-peer support, around being able to talk about student concerns, have peers undergo training that would be able to provide them the skills necessary to provide this kind of initial support, as well as knowing the limitations of what they're providing and having a supervision structure in place that allows us to do the training and supervision that would be critical to doing something like this.

We have always had peer educators as part of our student wellness program here at NIU, maybe people already know that. They've always been volunteer positions up until last year when we were able to pay students to be peer educators. Well guess what? We had a lot more students who were interested in being peer educators. And so, we as of last semester had 15 peer educators and two

GAs in our Student Wellness Office, who were beginning the efforts of more expanded peer-to-peer services. As we start this academic year, we have added an additional GA position for the supervision and coordination purposes, and we currently have 10 peer educators who are in paid positions. And we'll talk a little bit more about where we're going to be going next with our peers.

We also, under the recommendation and guidance of Dr. Beth Ingram, made efforts to use some of the funding to begin the process of becoming a JED Campus. For those of you who don't know about the [JED Foundation](#), it is a national organization that began after family lost a son to suicide while he was in college and now is one of the most nationally recognized organizations around suicide awareness and prevention, as well as substance use awareness and prevention. We have now made this an initiative. We have a three-year collaboration with JED to provide resources, implementation strategies, training around mental health awareness here at NIU to become a JED Campus. And where we are in that process really quick is that we had students actually complete a survey at the end of last semester, the spring semester, called the Healthy Mind Survey. We had over 450 students complete that. We'll have some information about that, combined with our own self-assessment as a university about mental health and wellness services, that we're providing. We're going to have an initial report coming our way soon, and we're going to have a sight visit with JED – our first one – in December, where a smaller working group will be working with our JED coordinator to take next steps about what are our initial priorities, implementation strategies that we'll be doing here. I will highlight really quickly that that would also include the potential of expanded mental health training across campus, not just student-focused, but faculty/staff as well. I want to be clear, not necessarily expanded mental health services for faculty and staff, but mental health awareness training in a more designated, strategic way. And that is one of the benefits of partnering with JED.

Last thing on this slide quickly: We've always done, CCS, student wellness has always been part of the orientation process when new students and their families are going through that process both before enrollment and after. We've been able to reassess, re-envision how do we best meet the MHEAC requirements around that orientation process, and that's been something we've been able to do in collaboration with our Orientation and First-Year Program staff.

K. Olson: The other part to mention is that part of MHEAC talks a lot about training and ensuring that we are a campus that understands mental health, but also that we have responsive staff and faculty, that we have responsive services. One of the things – and this is specifically in MHEAC – it talks about mental health first aid training for Housing staff. And that's critical, because as we have 4200 students living with us, it's important that we are wholistically serving them, because they are relying on that. It's also important that our staff understand how to look at red flags; they understand how to respond to that and that they're prepared to manage, because that operation is 24/7. Our students – we are their home; we are their resource; we are the people they're going to go to. And so, we've continued to provide that for our Housing staff, but also the opportunity has been for us to critically look at how do we train all of Housing? How are we intentional from our CAs, which is our community advisors, which are undergraduate students, all the way through our professional staff and how we continue that process, and we have continued to do that.

The other piece is really looking around our continued collaboration with Employee Well-being. This has really been an effort out of CCS with Tim and his staff and Brian Smith and his staff to come around what this looks like and how do we respond to student health concerns, how do we partner together. Several of you in the room – we have talked with academic advisors, we've come to colleges to talk about what this looks like. That's really a critical piece, and the act actually does talk about that – how do we make the connections and collaboration on our campus to have a unified effort around this. So, that's just another way we've done that.

T. Paquette: This is less about the funding that we're receiving from MHEAC, but something that certainly we wanted to highlight for everyone here today. We entered into a wonderful partnership with Athletics, we being Counseling and Consultation Services, Division of Student Affairs, to have a full-time embedded counselor, someone who was already on our staff and spending some time in Athletics. But Athletics was able to spend the full funding support for a full-time embedded counselor in Athletics. So, Dr. Cheyenne Beach is our embedded psychologist there. And we're in the process of going through a search to add an additional full-time staff member – four days in Athletics and Monday in CCS – but what that allowed us to do as a center is to use that salary savings to hire two master's level counselors, licensed counselors, at CCS. And that speaks to the MHEAC requirements of expansion of services, collaborations, agreements that allow for additional services. And this is one of the ways that we were able to do that. The embedded counselor model is certainly not unique to NIU, but it is something new that we've been able to implement in the last year or so; and in the room today, I will be completely transparent and say, as you take this back to your people, maybe there's opportunities to talk about possibilities of embedded counselors in your colleges and in different parts of campus. To be fair, we've had those conversations, and we'll continue to have those conversations, but this model is a powerful one. We provide psychologists across campus, different locations, and the salary process also allows us to expand services at the same time. Those partnerships can be potentially really helpful. We also – this is not new – but we are continuing our Compassionate Edge agreement. The funding helps with that to extend it for the full year. For those who don't know, we partnered with Compassionate Edge in Aurora, Illinois to provide tele-counseling and in-person services for students who are able to be closer to Aurora, to be able to have eight free counseling sessions, no cost. We help connect them and make that referral. This also helps us as a center meet the needs of diverse students. If students have a stronger preference to meet with a counselor of color or people who identify as part of a certain group, as part of the counseling process, our Compassionate Edge agreement has allowed us to be able to do that, and that's been super helpful.

When I mentioned earlier about our ability to expand peer support, we're excited about this new thing that we'll be launching this semester; we're not too far from making it official. We've also contracted with a company called [Togetherall](#). Every day I get messages and emails from companies saying, here's how we can solve your mental health crisis on campus. Maybe you get some of those too, but I get them every day, many of them. Togetherall started to separate themselves from the pack in some ways, especially if we're talking about expanded peer-to-peer support and providing 24/7 online platform support, cell phone support, that students can access at any time to get assistance from other trained peers who are also then monitored and supervised by licensed people above them. We're going to be implementing Togetherall on campus, and as part of that partnership, they are going to also be providing that mental health training to our peer educators so that we can continue to pilot and implement what peer-to-peer support can look like on this

campus. And this is kind of a dual way that we're going to be able to do that with the funding from the act. And I'm excited to report that we're going to continue to collaborate with the Presidential Commission on Well-being. I know that, because you're also talking to the co-chair of the Presidential Commission on Well-being. I've partnered with Dr. Alan Clemens for those who know Alan, to serve as co-chair for the newer commission that will be, I think in some ways, launching in full effect this academic year. We had our kick-off meeting on Monday, and it was great.

So, I think those are the things we wanted to highlighted in our more than ten minutes. Questions or comments or things to clarify?

F. Bohanon: I know one of the questions I brought up last year, and I heard you just mention it again this year, about students accessing diverse counselors. What's being done here on the NIU campus and how are students able to access those services in Aurora, who are not close to Aurora?

T. Paquette: Right, that's certainly the challenge. The honest answer there is we continue to do our best to recruit and retain a diverse counseling staff. I do think that the possibility could continue to be there around being able to contract with individual therapists who might be able to be adjunct staff to the counseling center, being able to, hopefully, have funding to support that, as well. Those are kind of the challenges, but I think it goes back to recruiting and retaining a diverse staff has been a challenge for CCS. It also is worth mentioning because it's true that the availability of counselors of color in the field is less. And so, right now what we're also seeing is that how can university counseling centers specifically think outside the box about ways that we could be partnering with a more diverse group of therapists to help supplement the services that we provide. The challenge is having people actually here on campus can be one of those challenges, actually in our office can be one of those things. But I will say this, and this is going to sound like a defensive response, but I want to make sure that it's communicated. Maybe you've seen this from Dr. Reneau's monthly report – we continue to be a counseling center that serves the diverse students here. The percentages of students that we see in the counseling center ,who represent our students, match the percentage in the general population or it's greater than the percentage in the general population. I think that's important to emphasize, because it means that we're doing something right in collaboration with our campus partners to make sure students are coming in to get the support that they need. Even if they might not have a counselor across from them that looks like them or identifies in a similar way, that support is being offered, and the students are coming in to get support. From that point forward, it's up to us to be able to say, how can we best meet your needs. And that's an ongoing effort that we're invested in every day. But, it is, I think, important to highlight the actual diverse students that we are seeing at CCS.

K. Olson: I just want to add a couple things. One is, and Tim mentioned, trying to also evaluate how we compare to other institutions in the state of Illinois. We did a salary an analysis, and we've done lots of proposals on how to support our counseling center so that we can recruit. That has been a barrier, and I'm really excited to report that we have filled that gap. So, we are very comparable and competitive within the state of Illinois, but also within mental health, university setting counseling positions. And so, that's been really helpful, and that was through a lot of partnerships, through our leadership, through our Provost's Office, through our human resource team. But that was an important piece that I think we need to know, because we also have to have the environment and the benefits to recruit somebody to come here. And we've done a lot of work around that.

I also want to highlight in answering that, because it's an excellent question, it's a need on our campus. The benefits of doing peer-to-peer support is that our peers can look like each other. We've been intentional about how do we look at our peer positions. We have the peer educators that we've talked about specifically through MHEAC, but as also have peer coaches within the Center for Student Assistance. And so, we've been really intentional to talk about what populations those peers represent and how can they connect to our students. One of the partnerships that we've had is around the [Chicago Hope Program](#) and connecting our students to have peers that relate to them, not just in the way that they look, but also where they come from, their backgrounds, the stress that they have within their family systems and how can our peers relate to them. And we've had a ton of success through that. I think those are also important ways for us to hear our students and understand it; but please know, I think you bring up an excellent point, and I appreciate it.

T. Paquette: Taylor, thanks for standing for as long as you have.

T. Atkins: You all have been busy. Kelly, you and I have talked about this before, all these programs, every method of [inaudible] and sometimes students will [inaudible] knowing they exist and still not take advantage of them. Some people really have a hard time asking for help. Do you have a sense about whether the usage is going up, not necessarily in numbers, but maybe percentage of student body? Are more people actually taking advantage of these services.

T. Paquette: Yep, thanks, Taylor. First of all, the first part of your question, I think, connects to the first question, which is: What are the barriers? What are the challenges that get in the way of any student, but maybe specifically students here at NIU, reaching out for counseling and mental health support? So, if we're talking about barriers, stigma, all the other things that are connected to those challenges, again our efforts to be out talking with students in collaboration with campus partners, the diversity centers, other programs on campus – how are we always trying to get the message out about breaking down those barriers? How can people, hopefully, get help as soon as possible? But we can't do that without the campus partnerships to make that happen.

We're talking about utilization rates. What I said was last years, and it's consistent at the start of this year, is that our numbers of students coming into the center has been about the same. We haven't seen any spikes up; we haven't seen any major drops down. But we know that, compared to enrollment numbers, which have been steadily declining, that would mean that if our percentages are staying about the same each year, we're seeing a slightly higher percentage of students reaching out for mental health support – except this year, which were about the same with enrollment numbers, so our percentages have tended to stay the same.

Here's what else we've learned over the last few years about that, is that we only have a certain capacity. Our staff and our available hours to provide services, at least at CCS, is limited. And so, I think that also reflects how our percentages stay about the same, because we reach that maximum capacity point every semester; and so I think that also contributes to the percentage rate each semester. Does that make sense?

K. Olson: One of the things that I will add to that is that we have also created interventions that are outside of just CCS. So, our numbers have continued to increase through those interventions, which would indicate our students do have a need. And that's why it's important for us to evaluate the opportunities such as with MHEAC of how do we best utilize those resources and represent what our students need. If we look at the peer-to-peer connections, we've had an increase of peer coaching on campus; we've had an increase of the peer educators and the work that they've done. We've also had engagement numbers continue to increase. If you've been at other meetings, you've heard that our engagement within Student Affairs continues to increase on an engagement level, which is phenomenal. A couple different pieces I would mention that connect to this: We hosted a wellness concert, which, when you say, "wellness concern," you're like, really, are people going to come to this? What does this mean? And so, we hosted a concert; we had wellness packs available for students; we had crafts happening, kind of that self-care mentality. And we had over 300 students come during Week of Welcome, who wanted to engage with it, that took the packs, that took them home, that wanted to continue the conversation. And so, we know that that's working; and the more we can normalize that, then it gives us comfort in knowing that those interventions, that peer-to-peer contact, is helpful. Because, as Tim said, capacity with counselors is real, but it doesn't mean we can't intervene in other ways. Today's another prime example. If you walked through MLK Commons, you would have seen our [Send Silence Packing](#) movement, which is a phenomenal partnership with the state of Illinois. We're one of just a few schools in Illinois that the state, in accordance with Aetna and Central Management Systems, has supported us in bringing that awareness to our campus. It's things like that, that we normalize, that mental health is real, and that it doesn't have to define you either. So, here's how we can help you. Here's how we can normalize on our campus. And those are just some of the ways that I think we've done.

C. Campbell: You've talked a little bit about peer relations in counseling and partnering with other resources on campus. I'm curious about the conversations around the [Community Counseling Training Center](#) and how the CCTC fits in, because there are graduate students being trained to be counselors. So, I think of that as another resource, but I didn't hear it mentioned it here, so I'm curious how it fits into all of this.

T. Paquette: Sure, absolutely, and maybe that's because it's not necessarily directly connected to MHEAC and the MHEAC requirements, but your point is absolutely true. We have CCTC in the College of Education. We have [Psychological Services Center](#) through the Department of Psychology. And we have the [Couple and Family Therapy Clinic](#) through the College of Health and Human Sciences. These are all training clinics that we're in partnership with. That's the reality; we're in partnership with each other. The directors of those centers talk and communicate on a regular basis about trends we're seeing, ways that we can support each other. And what that also means is that, if they have available openings for clients that are appropriate for referral there, we're in collaboration there all the time and vice versa. They might have clients that might have higher needs that really are more appropriate for us with our licensed mental health staff or making decisions about what higher level of care some students might need. That partnership is happening all the time.

E. McKee: I hear that part of what you're talking about to me is outsourcing opportunities like [inaudible] if in that process [inaudible] concerns about oversight, about coordination of [inaudible].

T. Paquette: Sure, absolutely. I think if we're talking about JED, that's a little bit more straightforward in terms of that oversight, because really what they're doing is providing us additional resources and opportunities to expand training, to help with different messaging, to connect to their dedicated pool of resources that are available that everyone across campus, so that's a little bit more straightforward.

With Togetherall, that was part of the vetting and decision-making process. So, the online peer support is always monitored by licensed staff and, without boring you with the details, they have their algorithm in place that flags any kind of concerning language about student risk, higher level of concerns. It was kind of fascinating to learn a little bit about this; even misspelled words are part of that algorithm, because people might not always spell what they're saying correctly, but it still would be flagged anyway. That was all part of our evaluation process with Togetherall, specifically. It also helps that Togetherall is in partnership with a company called [Protocall](#), which we've contracted with for many years at CCS to provide our on-call support after hours and over the weekend. So, that's also licensed staff who are providing after-hours mental health support to our students and faculty members or anyone who needs support after hours around mental health concerns, especially student-related mental health concerns. And Protocall and Togetherall have a partnership, as well. I hope that answers the question as how that's considered as part of the process. And I don't want to sound too sinical, but when I'm bombarded every day with these messages, it's hard to identify what really is helpful, what might be most helpful, because there are all kinds of options out there; and everyone says they have the solution or the ways to help. I think that's part of how Togetherall emerged. It's also something that's being used more often in other university counseling centers, which also helped.

I. Salehinia: I have a two-part question. Do you have any statistical analysis of the distribution of students, college-wise, department-wise. Is that information available? And the next question I have is: What is your plan for bringing the information you get, the experience you get, from all these students to bring it to the departments and colleges so that the faculty as a first line of support can also help the students. I had one student in my office. I asked him to talk to the chair, but he told me, no, he was not comfortable talking to the chair, but I didn't understand, I tried to understand.

T. Paquette: The first part of your question in terms of the student demographic or other identifying information that we have from students is extensive. I wouldn't say we see major trends around a certain major of students seeking support or from a certain college. That distribution's pretty wide. It probably wouldn't surprise you to know that the colleges that have more students tend to have more representation at the counseling center. Statistically that makes sense. But we do also, as I mentioned earlier, we're looking at student diversity information and other identity factors about who is coming in for counseling, who is asking for support, we're able to see that.

I think the second part of your question is really important, and I think it speaks to the other part of the MHEAC requirement around how are faculty and staff continuing to be trained around responding to and managing student mental health concerns. That's a vast topic with lots of different discussions, but I know from consultations with many of you and others, Brian Smith in

the Employee Wellness Program knows, other people on campus, the ombudsperson, Sandy Cox, we know and we'll well aware of the challenges that faculty and staff face in trying to provide support in the moment and maybe what gets in the way. And I could see MHEAC, as well as our ongoing efforts to provide that kind of consultation and training to faculty and staff is an ongoing need, especially as staff turns over and people leave and new people come into the university, being able to continue to get that messaging out and being able to help faculty and staff best respond, that's part of the work that we need to continue to do. I think that speaks to the barriers and challenges that get in the way of trying to connect students to support and how they do that, how you do that.

K. Olson: I will say that's the opportunity we have in front of us is to figure out what training does look like on our campus. We've talked about and we've had different models over the years of how we've addressed this topic. I just want to offer that we're always open for feedback. We're open to coming to department meetings, college meetings, to just hear from what would work. We've done everything from different modules online, we've done in-person, we've done consultations. But some of that might not be the right way to do this. Please know we're open to those conversations. That's also where JED will help continue to provide assessment. That's really kind of a goal of becoming a JED campus, to be able to utilize the assessment on our campus to tell the story of our student, so that as a campus we understand what is facing with our students, what are our students coming to our campus with, what are the trends that we can see year to year that are consistent to our population. That will be coming out, and when we have that data – and as Tim mentioned, we're going to do our first site visit with them in December, that's really going to be the benefit from that partnership, is that we're going to be able to see the identity of our students in a different way. Thank you, that's a wonderful question.

B. Swedlow: Do you have any information about how COVID has impacted mental health for students, because I'm seeing a lot of that.

K. Olson: Yes, we have, absolutely. I think the thing about COVID that we saw impacted our students in so many ways, in which one was the isolation piece. We're seeing a lot of our students who struggle with feeling isolated and not quite knowing how to engage with peers. We've done a lot of work in Housing and Residential Life around how we interact with roommates, how do we fit into a community. Because they've really been isolated in their education. They've been isolated in their interactions with peers. There's also a level of anxiety that has continued to rise with our students around society issues that are happening, around health. But all of that is impacting their mental health. What this has caused us, coming out of COVID, is to look at mental health in a lot of different ways. There's mental health that are diagnoses that need care that might be more specific to an individual. And then there is mental health that might be beneficial – and this is where the peer-to-peer support comes in – they just need somebody to talk to. That's not necessarily therapy. And we can create those connections for students to build that, to talk about these things. What we are seeing coming out of COVID is that they do want to talk. What I'll tell you is that the first year out of COVID, it was hard to engage our students. Everybody needed counseling; everybody wanted a therapist; they weren't quite connected peer-to-peer. And I think a lot of that was around they hadn't been with peers; they didn't have relationships with people; and it became a very professional, transactional life for them. If you look at how they completed graduation in high school, it was transactional, and that's what they really kind of viewed when they came to us, was

transactional. I need somebody to talk to, so that's going to be a therapist, and I need it here. Now what we're seeing is that they are hungry for that peer-to-peer contact, and they want to engage with one another; they want to figure out how to support one another. I will say that's kind of high level, I think Tim could talk more specifically on some of the things out of counseling, but I think that's, in general, what we've seen with our student body since COVID.

C. Sumner: Hi all, I'm Carol Sumner, vice president and chief diversity officer. I wanted to give a little other. I think as you're asking the questions about counseling with counselors who represent diverse communities, it's also cultural competency. We need to also say to students, I don't have to look like you or live like you to have an empathy and understanding of your experience. And I have taken it upon myself to become educated about your experience so that you can see me as an advocate and an ally, and not as someone who is not capable of helping you process some things that you are possibly going through. We need to not create this narrative that the only people who can help are the people who are directly in your community. I'm not saying that it's not necessary, but there aren't enough of us. So, if we're not being real about there is a lack of individuals who are represented in that space, we also know that, if you work with programs like master's of social work and other majors or degree areas, you will find more people of color in those fields, which allows you to do that. Peers sometimes don't want to grown folks about their issues, so a peer-to-peer model is very helpful.

And the last thing I'll say is that COVID was not done in a vacuum. We had a social justice thing happening at the same time, and death was all around. Many of our students lost multiple family members, jobs, homes, friends; all kinds of things were happening simultaneously. So, what I would also think about is not just counseling in terms of therapeutic, but how many students are now going to the Rec Center to participate in yoga or fitness. Or, how many have joined clubs and orgs and are finding social engagement in that way. I'm careful about us packaging mental health as a single approach and how students are taking advantage of faculty office hours. You all can tell us whether you're seeing more students in your offices simply talking about life. And if there's a mentoring capacity, how are we helping faculty to also support students in a broader context, because you didn't just show up to teaching – I'm going to assume this – you didn't just show up to teach your profession or field, but to engage students as change makers. Well, that means you are saying to them, I have an experience, as well, and I can tell you it's been a challenge. I know staff from my previous role – I've not had anyone here – who lost six family members due to COVID. Our staff members are also dealing with these things, so I know we're here for Faculty Senate; I am so grateful to have this opportunity, but I think we get a fixed point about what we think something looks like, and we have to think in diverse ways about the ways that we are being inclusive and equitable. Okay, I'm finished.

T. Paquette: Thank you, Dr. Sumner, for your last point too, because you said students. It was all of us, right? That's all I was thinking during that part of the conversation too. It's not just students, it's all of us, and I know we do need to wrap up at this point, so thank you, everyone, for sharing.

B. Creed: Just want to say thank you, as well, to both of you for coming in to share the updates and create space for this conversation to occur. Clearly, it's important to the Faculty Senate and those people that are here to engage in these conversations. And thank you, Dr. Sumner, for bringing that to the front in the last part of that conversation. I do appreciate that.

IX. NEW BUSINESS

- A. Approve Professor Therese Arado to serve as a faculty representative on the 2023-24 University Fee Advisory Group

B. Creed: The next item for us to consider is new business, item IX. We only have the one item for today, and that is to approve Therese Arado to serve as a faculty representative on the 2023-24 University Fee Advisory Group. We'll use a voice vote for this approval. All in favor of approving Therese Arado to serve as the faculty representative for this year's University Fee Advisory Group, say aye.

Members: Aye.

B. Creed: All opposed? Abstentions? All right, thank you so much, Therese. I saw you, I think, toward the back, but thank you for serving in this capacity.

X. REPORTS FROM COUNCILS, BOARDS AND STANDING COMMITTEES

- A. Faculty Advisory Council to the IBHE – report
Linda Saborío, NIU representative to FAC-IBHE
1. What are some of NIU's university-wide or college-specific requirements for graduation, other than general education and major courses? A few examples are the COB Business Passport program, a writing infused course and the human diversity requirement.

B. Creed: Moving on to reports from our councils, boards and standing committees, the first one up is the Faculty Advisory Council to the IBHE. Linda Saborío is going to share that report.

L. Saborío: Good afternoon, everyone. The Faculty Advisory Council had its first meeting on September 15 down at Illinois Valley Community College. At our first meeting, we generally like to spend some time getting to know our new members. We introduced them to the caucus groups and to the working groups. But at this meeting, we also got the opportunity to meet with Illinois Rep. Lance Yednock. We had a great conversation with him about our working groups and some of the concerns we have with early college credit, as well as student debt. He came up with the analogy of student debt of looking at it as kind of like a donut hole. You have this rather large group of students who come from families where their incomes fall above the threshold for financial aid, but yet they don't make enough to cover a student's total cost of education. That is something that he found interesting and that he wanted to look at. He invited us to come meet with him, in fact, to talk more about it, and it was a great conversation.

We had two presentations by Stephanie Bernoteit from the IBHE and Jill Gebke. Stephanie is retiring from the IBHE; it was a surprise to us to hear that. She's been our liaison with the IBHE for several years. Her first presentation had to do with the [Illinois Articulation Initiative](#) at 30 years. Foundations in the future – she gave us some background on the IAI and its purpose and with a big focus on robust, statewide participation. And she gave us a few updates to the [IAI Act](#), amendments

to the IAI Act that are effective January 1, 2024. I'll just read through this first one. "The IAI major courses must be transferrable as direct course equivalents toward the requirements of the major. If the receiving institution does not offer the course or does not offer it at the lower division level, the student shall receive elective lower division major credit toward the requirements of the major for the course and may be required to take the course at the upper division level." A little bit wordy, isn't it, but anyway, that was the first one. And then the second major update was regarding oversight, and it looks like they're going to add a panel on elementary and secondary education. I do have those slides available. There was a lot more information, of course, packed in there; and if you're interested, I'd be more than happy to share them with you.

The second presentation was on higher education paths to equity, sustainability and growth, looking closely at closing the equity gap for students who have been left behind. She spoke to us about some grant opportunities to end student housing insecurity, the Mental Health Early Action on Campus Act, which we just saw the presentation on today, funding model for the state, recruiting more nursing students, early childhood education and much more. So, again, I have those slide decks if you're interested; a lot of information there.

Our next meeting is October 20, and we'll be down at Illinois State University. And that concludes my report today. I told George I would keep it short. How did I do, George? Okay. Thanks.

B. Creed: Thanks.

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: The next report is from the University Advisory Committee to the Board of Trustees. I'll be presenting that report, and other members that were there, please feel free to add if I miss anything important. The Board of Trustees recently met on September 27, and there were a few items to highlight from that meeting. Beyond formally approving some of the items I had shared the last go-round, there were I think three updates I'll share. But first, I just want to once again to encourage members of the Faculty Senate to pay attention to the Board of Trustees agendas and reports that come out ahead of those meetings. It's a really important and useful place to review information or what's coming down the pipe, and so you can stay informed about key university information.

The Board of Trustees approved a request to work with a company called [ReUp](#) to re-enroll former NIU students who last enrolled over a year ago. This is an effort to find those students who stopped out for a variety of reasons and bring them back to NIU to finish their degrees with us. ReUp will work to identify eligible students, reach out to them on our behalf, and then provide non-academic supports to those students if they choose to re-enroll. And we're joining the ranks of about 80 other universities that are working with ReUp in this way.

The Board of Trustees heard updates from the Graduate School around enrollments and state of international students attending our university. And we also had a presentation about the community college transfer programs, the enrollment, partnerships and other strategies NIU is engaged with to partner with community colleges in the region as pipelines into our university.

And that's my report from the Board of Trustees.

- C. Baccalaureate Council – no report
Amanda Ferguson, Chair
Alicia Schatteman, Vice Provost for Academic Affairs

B. Creed: Next up is the Baccalaureate Council, which has no report for this meeting.

- D. Faculty Rights and Responsibilities Committee – no report

B. Creed: Same for the Faculty Rights and Responsibilities Committee.

- E. Social Justice Committee – report

- 1. [2022-23 Year End Report](#)

B. Creed: The Social Justice Committee – I'll present that report, as well. The committee met for the first time two Wednesday ago, Sept. 20. Conversation focused around reviewing the history of the committee, the work that's been done to this point by that group, and beginning the conversation about goals of the committee for this year and into the future. For this year, that committee will be engaged in completing a handful of ongoing efforts, including offering up recommendations to amend Faculty Senate Bylaws related to promotion and tenure, specifically Article 8, and then also completing analysis of institutional data that will give insights into the state of affairs on campus. The committee will also work this year to identify a handful of key priorities to engage with this year and into the upcoming years. The Social Justice Committee plans to engage with Chief Diversity Officer Sumner and her office, as well as Interim Provost Elish-Piper and her office, to make sure the efforts of the Social Justice Committee are in alignment, contribute to and otherwise inform efforts across campus. And then finally, the Social Justice Committee received and discussed the 2022-23 Year End Report, which is included in your packet, as well as made available online with the other annual reports from the standing Faculty Senate and University Council committees. So, you can always find that online, as well. And that concludes this report.

- F. FS-UC Rules, Governance and Elections Committee – no report
Emily McKee, FS/RGE Liaison/Spokesperson

B. Creed: There is no report from the Faculty Senate-University Council Rules, Governance and Elections Committee.

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

B. Creed: Is there a report from the Student Government Association? I don't think so; I do not see Cole here.

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

B. Creed: Natasha, do you have an Operating Staff Council report?

N. Johnson: Hi everybody, Natasha Johnson, president of Operating Staff Council. Our council meets tomorrow, so I'll have more information next time. One thing that we did notice is we were having a challenge with getting and keeping operating staff, whether they're on the OSC committee or other committees or these committees, because of their workloads. Currently, they're not able to be as involved as they would like to be. Several people have noted that they're doing two and three jobs for one pay at this time, until something, hopefully, goes through with HR. So, at this time, we're really trying to work hard to keep the people we currently have and then also get new people engaged so the workload is not a lot for just a few people. They always say many hands make light load, so for us, we're trying to get more people engaged so that we don't have to have the same ten people on eight to ten committees. That's pretty much where we are now; we'll talk more about our priorities – I did get that information, but I need to share it with OSC first. Thank you.

B. Creed: Thank you, Natasha.

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

B. Creed: Felicia, do you have a report?

F. Bohanon: No report.

B. Creed: All right, thank you, Felicia.

XI. INFORMATION ITEMS

- 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](#)
- R. 2023-24 FS schedule: Sep 6, Oct 4, Nov 1, Nov 29, Jan 24, Feb 21, Mar 27, Apr 24
- 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 if you can help.
- T. Annual call for [honorary doctoral degree nominations](#); materials must be submitted by Friday, Oct. 27.
- U. [Fall 2023 Commencement](#)
Graduate Commencement – Saturday, Dec. 16, 2023
Undergraduate Commencement – Sunday, Dec. 17, 2023

B. Creed: That brings us to informational items. I'd like to draw your attention to items Q through U at the bottom. Item Q are the annual reports from select groups and committees. Item R is the schedule for upcoming Faculty Senate meetings; nothing has changed with that, but just leaving it there for your viewing. Item S is that reminder that we are still looking for one tenured or tenure-track faculty member to serve on this committee. Item T is making its last appearance, and it's a reminder about the annual call for the honorary degree nominations. Item U is a reminder about fall 2023 commencement, and if you could please mark your calendars to attend if you are able. We are really hoping to encourage and improve faculty attendance, particularly at the undergraduate commencements. This is a chance to honor and celebrate students who we've been working with and we supported along the way at this culminating point in their journey.

XII. ADJOURNMENT

B. Creed: And that is the last of our informational items, and so moving on to Item XII, which is adjournment. Do I have a motion to adjourn the meeting? Valentin, and second Johnson. All in favor?

Members: Aye.

B. Creed: thank you, all, for a good meeting.

Meeting adjourned at 4:07 p.m.