TRANSCRIPT – FACULTY SENATE

**Wednesday, March 26, 2025, 3 p.m.**

**Altgeld Hall Auditorium**

**Northern Illinois University**

**DeKalb, Illinois**

**VOTING MEMBERS PRESENT:** Akst, Arado, Atkins, Barrett, Bender, Books, Brain, Burton, Cain, Campbell, Chomentowski, Creed, Davis (for Alex), Demir, Duffin, Finch, Fotovat, Ito, John, Lampi, Liberty, Libman, Luo, McGowan, McKee, Mellon, Mills, Naples, Novak, Nyunt, O’Grady (for Bohanon), Palese, Qin, Rajabi, Sabio, Salimi, Schmidt, Sharp, Sirotkin, Slagstad, Staikidis, Stalcup, Thomas, Vahabzadeh, Valentiner, Van Wienen, VanTilburg, Whedbee, Wheeler, Woods

**VOTING MEMBERS ABSENT:** Alex, Bohanon, Corpuz, Hartenhoff, Kushimo, Ross, Sibley, Slotsve, Wang, Yang

**OTHERS PRESENT:** Abreu, Bryan, Buhrow, Elish-Piper, Falkoff, Hodge, Hughes, Johnson, Middlemist, Napientek, Nolan, Puckett, Schatteman, Skuzinski, Srygler, Sumner

**OTHERS ABSENT:** Cripe, Garcia, Notebaert, Strid

**I. Call to Order**

**B. Creed:** Good afternoon. I would like to call to order today’s meeting of the Faculty Senate on Wednesday, March 26. I have 3 p.m. on my clock.

**II. Verification of Quorum**

**B. Creed:** Pat, can I verify that we have a quorum.

**P. Erickson:** We do have a quorum.

**B. Creed:** Awesome.

**III. Adoption of the Agenda**

**B. Creed:** Then, the first item up for us is adoption of the agenda. Can I have a motion to adopt the agenda for today’s meeting. Thank you, Scott. Second, Beth. All in favor of adopting the agenda, please say aye.

**Members:** Aye.

**B. Creed:** Opposed? Abstentions. All right, agenda is adopted.

**IV. Approval of the February 19, 2025, minutes**

**B. Creed:** Next up is the approval of the February 19, 2025, minutes. Can I have a motion to approve the minutes? Thank you, Cynthia. And then I saw Karen, if I can give you the second. Any discussion, edits or comments? Hearing none, all in favor of approving the February 19, 2026, minutes, please say aye.

**Members:** Aye.

**B. Creed:** Opposed? Abstentions? One abstention. Our minutes are approved.

**V. Public Comment**

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

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

**VI. Faculty Senate President’s Announcements**

**B. Creed:** That brings us to Faculty Senate President’s Announcements. I know we do have a packed agenda, so I will try to be brief and succinct. I wanted to follow up on slightly updated themes that I’ve been hearing and presented at the February Faculty Senate meeting related to the shifts in the federal context and agency policies and that survey that I sent out, and subsequent conversations. Just a reminder, there are three themes or concerns about academic freedom, wanting practice to reflect the commitment to maintain mission, vision and values of the institution; and a call for ongoing communication, guidance and leadership from the university’s senior administration. I want to share a bit of where things are at, what I’m advocating for, what I’ve heard and also what we can do to continue holding ourselves and others accountable to fulfilling our role as members of this community.

For academic freedom, we as a campus are committed to, and hold, academic freedom as sacrosanct and fundamental to higher education and the academy more broadly. As faculty, we are committed to ensuring academic freedom is preserved here at NIU and within the broader academy. And this aligns with senior administration’s beliefs, as well. As faculty, I’ve heard this pretty consistently, that we will continue to take actions to support academic freedom of our faculty and academic freedom on our campus. We do recognize that NIU is committed to academic freedom as is evidenced by our public commitments and comments from senior leadership, as well as the statements on our website. And I know the Faculty Rights and Responsibilities Committee – and I appreciate the feedback on this – maybe last time I was a little bit more overdoing it with the amount of work that’s gone on in FRR. I just want to make sure folks know that we have been engaged in the conversation for about a year and a half at this point. The conversation is ongoing; it’s not like there is a buttoned-up recommendation and all that going on. It’s a forming conversation, and I encourage everybody to continue to be engaged in that work as [inaudible] was able. But I just want to suggest that we’ve been focused – the reason why I brought it up last time was to suggest and to share that this body has been trying to address and support academic freedom that goes beyond just January 20 and after the new administration came in. This is a long-term standing commitment of campus.

We as a campus and as a faculty expect continuation of the commitments to academic freedom. We support actions that are taken to protect, elevate and safeguard academic freedom here on NIU’s campus and within the broader academy. And we oppose, as a faculty, all actions – inside or external to – the institution, which would erode academic freedom.

One joint effort that I wanted to encourage you to look for soon, and I wanted to share today, is a Faculty Senate-sponsored series around academic freedom that I’m working to develop in collaboration with Chief Strategy Officer Matt Streb, which will likely include a book study, focused conversation, other activities, which will help campus (and this is staff, faculty, students and senior administration) develop a shared understanding of academic freedom and ideas, and ways to continue to deepen supports for academic freedom. This, as implied, will be open as details emerge, to faculty, staff, students and senior administration to participate. So, this is a joint conversation, a joint effort, but it will be Faculty Senate led in the upcoming academic year. Potentially, a little pre-work over the summer, as well, for those who want to participate.

Related to the commitment to mission, vision and values of the institution, by continuing to do the work, we’ve heard, faculty have heard, and applaud, the commitment to continuing to do the work that has been shared in public forums and in individual conversations. While I do recognize that some changes to our websites, to our materials and so on, are part of efforts that have been going on for some time, I wanted to echo the words of leaders from across the country, inside and outside of higher education, which strongly call on campuses to avoid anticipatory compliance. Where there are changes that have been made, based on long-standing efforts or are a part of the core work that we’re trying to do as a campus to improve, we should highlight those changes as having that as the starting point, as the impetus. We should elevate and show that that work is not just reactionary, but is part of a thoughtful and forward-thinking effort. And where action is taken out of compliance with law, regulations and other related things, it’s understandable that those changes need to be engaged with. But the thing that I would suggest, and that I’ve been hearing from faculty as a concern, is that fear is guiding some of the changes that have been going on. And so, I would make the claim that fear should not be the basis of any of our changes, and we should not allow fear, alone, to be the reason why we make changes. And this applies to us all, from faculty, staff and students, to senior leadership. We should not allow that uncertainty to provide cover for changes or to walk away from the work. And I want to be very clear, I’m not suggesting we are, as a campus, or in any individual place, walking away from any work.

What I am trying to suggest is that there is an opportunity – and this ties into the third topic, which is consistent communication. When we don’t communicate the rationale for why changes are occurring or have opportunities to engage in those conversations locally or more broadly about the why, we as humans like to tell stories and connect dots. And we will put a story there. And if it’s not the story that’s the reason for that change, that false story, the applied story then becomes the one that we carry forward and we talk with our colleagues and peers about.

So, with that, I think there has been a consistent ask for more consistent multi-directional communication that’s formally in emails, speeches and other public venues, but also informal conversations through town halls or one-on-ones or just coffees and opportunities like that. I think having those routines for both formal and informal communications is especially important during these times and during times of uncertainty. I know, personally, I can do a better job in doing both the formal and informal communications. So, one of the things that I will be doing soon is reaching out to our new-to-NIU faculty to have a series of conversations and just town halls, open spaces for folks who are either at the assistant professor level or have been hired to NIU as faculty members at the associate or full within the past three years. Just to have an opportunity for me to learn, to dialog, to engage with those faculty who are newest to our community. I will also be reaching out and trying to figure out ways with departments, colleges or other spaces to just dialog and come in front of faculty across campus. So, please do look for those opportunities to either accept my trying to nudge into your spaces, or invite me directly into those spaces where I can be helpful. Not that I have all the answers, but I want to be engaged and learn and share and commune.

Similar to my last message, I encourage everyone in this room, and anybody watching or elsewhere, to engage in conversation, dialog, and communications in your role as faculty senator, or the other roles that you hold on campus. To make sure you’re sharing accurate information, when you hear something that you try to figure out is this grounded in fact. If so, and it’s worrisome, do the advocacy work locally, make others aware of it, and try to push forward. Where you’re uncertain about something, help folks figure out how to find answers. And, ultimately, elevating those concerns locally and more broadly is an important way to continue to push forward in this time.

As I said at the last meeting, as well, I am optimistic and generally positive about where we are and also where we are headed as an institution, related to those three items, as well as other things. But I believe we are committed to protecting academic freedom. I believe leadership and faculty are committed to living into our mission, vision and values. And I believe that we are improving our communication and that folks want to do that work. And it’s incumbent upon all of us to be part of that communication and that dialog.

I will continue to engage in the work that is in my purview that I have access to or that I am part of. And I look forward to collaborating with, and learning from, and otherwise engaging with, those committed to moving NIU forward in the ways that I have just laid out, as well as any other ways that I can. So, that is my trying to be succinct during my announcements before we continue moving on. I encourage folks to use my office hours or just reach out and see if there’s a time for coffee or any other type of engagement. Thank you.

**VII. Provost’s Announcements**

**B. Creed:** With that, I will move on to the provost’s announcement, and I invite up Provost Elish-Piper.

**L. Elish-Piper:** I’m going to be very brief here. I just want to remind everyone that we have commencements coming up. And I wanted to make sure that these get on calendars. Our graduate commencement ceremony is Friday, May 9, at 4 p.m. We always have great faculty representation at the graduate ceremony, and thank you for that. I anticipate that will be the case again this year. We generally don’t have as many faculty who are able to come to our undergraduate ceremonies. So, I want you to give consideration to your availability for the Saturday morning, 10 a.m. undergraduate commencement. That’s for the Colleges of Liberal Arts and Sciences; Engineering and Engineering Technology; and Visual and Performing Arts. And then our undergraduate ceremony at 2 o’clock is for the Colleges of Education; Business; and Health and Human Sciences. Communications went out this week inviting you to RSVP for those so that we know you’re coming and that we can put your name on the list to make sure you have access to the door that you can enter for that and also for parking.

I also want to let you know about an event that is on May 7 that is a somewhat new event, which is our [Gradpalooza](https://calendar.niu.edu/event/class-of-2025-gradpalooza?utm_campaign=widget&utm_medium=widget&utm_source=NIU+Events+Calendar). Gradpalooza is a celebration that the Alumni Association is providing in collaboration with Student Affairs and Academic Affairs to allow students to come together and engage in some fun activities, take pictures, decorate their caps, have an opportunity to connect and write messages to favorite professors and advisors. We did it for the first time in December, and it was well attended and well received. And so, we’re planning that event on Wednesday, May 7, from 3 to 7. It’s an open house, kind of drop-in, if your schedule allows you. We’ll be on the ground floor of Holmes Student Center, and we hope you can stop by and congratulate the graduates.

Also want to let you know that the faculty awards ceremony is scheduled for April 17 at 3 o’clock in this room. And it will be an opportunity to celebrate and to announce all of the faculty awardees who have received university-level awards.

Hopefully, you can get those items on your calendar, and we look forward to seeing you at those. Thank you.

**B. Creed:** Sorry, we had slides that we couldn’t quite get projected; so, we’ll share them afterward.

**VIII. Unfinished Business**

A. Presentation of the Bob Lane Faculty Advocacy Award to

Professor Todd D. Reeves

Department of Educational Technology, Research and Assessment

**B. Creed:** Well, as that gets figured out, fortunately, the next item up doesn’t have any slides next to it. We move on to unfinished business. The first item up is the presentation of the Bob Lane Faculty Advocacy Award, and I saw Todd Reeves is here. If you cant to come up while I say a few words.

On behalf of the Faculty Senate, I want to recognize you as the recipient of the Bob Lane Faculty Advocacy Award. This is an award that recognizes faculty for service, which goes above and beyond. Dr. Reeves was nominated by his colleague in ETRA, Dr. Ketsman. He was nominated for his work within NIU, particularly the college and departmental levels, as well as the work that he’s done outside of the institution. You can see the letter of nomination that covers some of the key and highlighted aspects and pieces of evidence related to his nomination.

Thank you again for your service, Dr. Reeves, and congratulations. [applause]

As you know, Todd, your name will be displayed on a plaque, which currently hangs in the Faculty Senate president’s office. Thank you. If anybody wants to see it, please feel free to stop by, and then we can have a conversation too.

B. Proposed amendment to FS Bylaws

Article 10, Appeal Procedures for Academic Personnel Decisions

Article 11, Sabbatical Leave Policy

SECOND READING/VOTE

Ben Creed, Faculty Senate President

**B. Creed:** Up next is a proposed amendment to Faculty Senate Bylaws, which is related to Articles 10 and 11, related to the appeal procedures for the academic personnel decisions, both promotion and tenure, as well as sabbatical appeals. The full changes and summary are in your packets on pages 13 through 20. Before we start a discussion, we need a first and then a second. So, can I have a first for the proposed amendment to Faculty Senate Bylaws, Article 10 and 11? Thank you. A second? Thank you, Emily.

I will kick off conversation. Just as a reminder, this proposal is to amend the appeal procedures for both promotion and tenure decisions, and sabbatical determinations. These were vetted and forwarded by the Faculty Senate Personnel Committee at their January 14, 2025, meeting. There are multiple changes, included in the package to align the timelines, update information and terminology, and most importantly, update an overly onerous process. Of note, the difference from the first reading is that we have removed the language related to the eligibility for subsequent sabbaticals from this proposal, and it will be considered as a stand-alone proposal, which we will discuss and vote on next.

With that, I will open it up for any discussion related to this proposed amendment to the Faculty Senate Bylaws. All right, I think that is sufficient wait time for any discussion on this. Hearing no conversation, I would like to call the motion to a clicker vote. I will turn it over to Pat to lead us through that process. And I realize I did not mention, even though I have it in my notes as I introduce this, that I was supposed to tell people, if you have not picked up a clicker in the back of the room, please do head that way as Pat walks us through the process.

**P. Erickson:** I think the first thing we’re going to do is make sure that you know if you’re a voting member. Let me pull this slide back up here. I’m not sure if you can read it, but if you see your name up there, or you’re here today for somebody whose name is up there, that means you are a voting member and you should be getting a clicker that’s in the back of the room. And I think you’re all looking pretty sure about that.

The next thing I want to alert you to is what it takes to pass an amendment to the bylaw. First, to become effective, the amendment must be approved by a vote of two-thirds of those voting, provided at least two-thirds of the voting members are present. So, the first thing we’re going to do is make sure that two-thirds of the voting membership is present in the room. We have 59 members seated today; so, my math says two-thirds of that is 40. I’m going to open the poll, and I’m going to ask everybody to click 1 or A on their clicker, and we’ll, hopefully, get that number up to 40. And we have, so that’s all good, you can stop that exercise.

The next part is to explain how the voting works. You know that 1 or A on your clicker is yes, you agree with the motion to approve the proposal; 2 or B is no, you don’t agree; 3 or C is abstain. That means that you’re telling us that you’re present, but you’re choosing not to vote. If you click 3, it will have zero impact on the outcome of this vote.

Now I’ll open that poll, and you can go ahead and click 1, 2 or 3. It seems to be stopped. Anybody else? Okay. That clearly passes.

Yes – 41 votes

No – 1 vote

Abstain – 5 votes

**B. Creed:** Good, thank you. That will be reflected in the Faculty Senate Bylaws probably within a little bit here.

C. Proposed amendment to FS Bylaws

Article 11.4, Sabbatical Policies

SECOND READING/VOTE

Ben Creed, Faculty Senate President

**B. Creed:** The next proposed amendment to Faculty Senate Bylaws is on pages 21 to 23. This is related to Article 11.4, the sabbatical policies. This is a proposed amendment related to the eligibility for sabbaticals after an initial sabbatical. The full changes and summary in your packet, as I said, on pages 21 to 23. We’ll need a first and then a second. And then we’ll have a discussion before we have a vote. So, if I could have a motion for the proposed amendment. Thank you, Pete. Second? Thank you, Therese. So, we have a first and a second.

I’ll start off the discussion before handing it over. As mentioned previously, this was pulled out as a separate proposal. The Faculty Senate Personnel Committee forwarded the recommendation to replace the Faculty Senate Bylaws language. We’ve added the BOT regulations. The reason why it was pulled out was due to a question raised from the floor during the first reading. In the meantime, I did some homework based on the conversation that was had then. And then I also met with concerned faculty about the topic, and we came to an agreement to proceed in this manner.

The next part of that is that I will invite up Mark Van Wienen to start the discussion off.

**M. Van Wienen:** Okay, so you’re going to share the language that I sent over?

**B. Creed:** Yes, it will be on the screen in just a second.

**M. Van Wienen:** Okay. This is very helpful, because it shows the original language that was struck, and then the language that was proposed at the last meeting, which is in grey. To me, when I read those together, I preferred the first option, the one that our Faculty Senate had previously had, because of its precision in terms of spelling out exactly what interval of time needed to pass before the next sabbatical could be had. And it was on that basis that I stood up and raised a question.

As I took a further look at the language, I did realize that there was, in fact, a distinction between “No person shall receive a leave more than once in seven years,” and the language that “72 months must pass between sabbaticals.” The distinction – oh I hesitate to do this, because I’m going to embarrass myself with how rudimentary my visual aids are, but I think this does explain it.

Here in graphic form is how sabbaticals work. This is the traditional one-year sabbatical. This pattern, sabbatical here, one semester, two semesters. Then you’ve got year one, two, three, four, five, six, totaling 72 months. And then you have an other sabbatical. This scenario meets perfectly the language that is in the Board of Trustees Regulations, and the language that was formerly in our bylaws of the Faculty Senate. You see, you’ve got one sabbatical in seven years.

Now, the problem is when it comes to a one-semester sabbatical. A sabbatical is a sabbatical, whether it’s a year or whether it’s a semester. But if it’s a semester, follow me here, you start a semester earlier on the countdown to the next sabbatical. So, you’ve got a half year, a year, a year, a year, a year, a year, and then a half year, brings you to 72 months. Then you get another sabbatical. But, oops, that violates the rule of no more sabbatical than one per seven years. Make sense? This is cool with the old rule and the new language where we’re mimicking what is in the Board of Trustees Regulations.

The remedy – wait for it – one more semester, and then you can start your sabbatical. That meets the seven-year rule, because your seven years, there’s your sabbatical. Or, here’s seven years, and there’s your sabbatical.

Now, I know that the language that I proposed could be more economical, and I know how it could be more economical. However, I think that the explicitness distinguishing between the one-year sabbatical and how it works out, and the one-semester sabbatical and how it works out, is worth including in the language for the sake of explicitness and clarity. I would think of this in terms of the Board of Trustees has laid out a policy; we repeat that policy in our language; and then we add some procedural language to make it explicit exactly how it will work out.

That’s my little journey through how the two procedures and policies align, and this is effectively my proposal. So, I move that. [applause] I’m glad this is recorded; it’s not often I get applause.

**B. Creed:** We’ll make sure that gets in the transcript. So, we now have a movement.

**M. Van Wienen:** I move this as better language for our amendment.

**B. Creed:** So, we have a motion to amend the language. We would need a second for that. We have a second [A. Finch]. Any discussion related to this proposed amended language as is on the screen. We got it beforehand, so we had the explicit language here so we’re not trying to wordsmith on the fly. I can give a second, because I know this is a first time for folks.

**A Finch:** Thank you. I just wanted to say that the reason I support making the change is because I worry that, if we don’t spell out exactly what it means, people will think that you have to wait seven years in between sabbaticals instead of six or six-and-a-half. I know people will often say things like, “Oh, I had to go to the ninth floor, so I had to walk up nine flights of stairs.” And I always say, “No, you don’t. You had to walk up eight flights of stairs, because you started on the first floor, and nine minus one is eight.” So, I worry, I know people have this tendency to do this sort of things, so I worry that people look at this and say, “Oh, yeah, got to wait seven years.” And we, obviously, don’t want that. So, that’s why I support this.

**B. Creed:** Thank you. If there’s no other discussion, the operation here is that we would now call this to a vote, and it’s a simple majority vote. And we’ll just be voting on this as the amended language. Then we’ll have a vote that requires the two-thirds of those present of the amended language. We can do a voice vote, because it’s a simple majority. All in favor of approving the amendment as on the screen to the language that was proposed, please say aye.

**Members:** Aye.

**B. Creed:** Opposed? Abstentions? All right, the amendment [motion to amend] passes. That then brings us to – does anybody have discussion on the overall new language that will be coming through as the proposed amendment to the Faculty Senate Bylaws, which is just what’s on the screen here. I’m assuming no, because we already had it, but I’m just giving a little bit of wait time in case by just talking out loud. Okay, so, now we will take it through clicker vote, so I will turn it over to Pat one more time to pull up the poll and lead us through.

**P. Erickson:** Okay, same drill, 1 or A is yes, you agree with the proposed amendment; 2 or B is no, you don’t agree; 3 is abstain. Two-thirds of those of you voting need to vote yes in order to pass the bylaw change. And if you click 3, you’re telling us that you’re here but you’re not voting, so it won’t impact the outcome. Okay, we’re going to close it. And that passes.

Yes – 37 votes

No – 5 votes

Abstain – 7 votes

**B. Creed:** All right. I should have added this in the discussion, but first, thank you for the visual aid. I think it is an important way to carry it forward. [applause] So, let the record show two rounds of applause and a great visual aid. Thank you.

D. Proposed amendment to FS Bylaws

Article 3.5.1, Social Justice Committee Composition

SECOND READING/VOTE

Felicia Bohanon, Supportive Professional Staff Council President

Natasha Johnson, Operating Staff Council President

Ben Creed, Faculty Senate President

**B. Creed:** Moving on to item D, which is a proposed amendment to Faculty Senate Bylaws related to the Social Justice Committee’s composition. The full changes and summary are in your packet on page 24. Once again, we will need a first and a second before we open it up for discussion and then a vote. Is there a first? Arado. And then David Valentiner, second.

The purpose of this proposal is to update the membership requirements for the Faculty Senate Social Justice Committee in order to improve participation on the committee. While priority will be given to faculty senators who are interested, this changed language provides flexibility and routes for representation of the constituency groups that are named in the committee composition. This has been done in collaboration with the Supportive Professional Staff Council president and the Operating Staff Council president, and making it consistent throughout. With that, I will open it up for any discussion on this topic. Hearing none, I would like to call the motion to a clicker vote. I think we know the drill at this point. We’ll turn it over to Pat once more.

**P. Erickson:** One or A is yes, you agree with the motion to approve this amendment. Two or B is no, you don’t agree. Three is abstain; you’re telling us that you’re here but you’re choosing not to vote. Okay, we’re ready to close it. And that passes.

Yes – 38 votes

No – 1 vote

Abstain – 6 votes

**B. Creed:** Thank you all.

E. Proposed amendment to FS Bylaws

Article 8, The Academic Personnel Process

SECOND READING/VOTE

Ben Creed, Faculty Senate President

**B. Creed:** Our last proposed amendment to Faculty Senate Bylaws with a vote is a set of changes to Article 8, which involve the academic personnel process. The full changes and summary are in your packet on pages 25 through 27. Once again, we need a first and a second, and then we’ll have a discussion before we vote. Can I have a first? Thank you, James Burton. A second? David, thank you.

As a reminder, these updates initiated out of a working group of faculty senators. Those faculty senators put together a set of recommendations to the Faculty Senate Personnel Committee, who took up those recommendations, reviewed them and updated them. So, the Faculty Senate Personnel Committee, at their January meeting, voted on the collection of changes as you see them here, for consideration by the full body of the Faculty Senate. There are five recommended changes, which are outlined in the packet, and we discussed last time.

The five changes are updates to the review cycle. The second one is annual written feedback on progress toward promotion and tenure. There was clarity in the language about who’s eligible for that. There was an update to the time and length for promotion policy that retained the same timeline but provided more specificity to that. There was a creation of a policy where one did not exist before about how to count work done prior to time at NIU. And then, finally, there was an ensuring written rationale being provided to any probationary faculty who are not reappointed. That was something that was a suggestion rather than a mandated requirement. With that, I will open it up for any discussion on this package of changes to Faculty Senate Bylaws, Article 8. All right, hearing no discussion or conversation, I’d like to call the motion to a clicker vote. And again, similar to last time, the quicker we do it, the quicker we get the results.

**P. Erickson:** I see you’re already voting. One or A is yes, 2 or B is no, 3 or C is abstain, I’m here, but I’m not voting. Looks like that’s it. And that passes.

Yes – 36 votes

No – 2 votes

Abstain – 8 votes

**B. Creed:** All right, thank you all. That was a lot of voting, so I would say I’m turning the mic over, but I am not at this moment.

**IX. New Business**

A. Proposed amendment to FS Bylaws

Article 4.4.1.3, Graduate Council Administrative Representation

FIRST READING

Jessica Reyman, Acting Dean, Graduate School

Amy Buhrow, Assistant Vice Provost, Accreditation, Assessment and Evaluation

**B. Creed:** That brings us to new business. The first item up is proposed amendment to Faculty Senate Bylaws related to Article 4.4.1.3, which is Graduate Council administrative representation. As this is a first reading, there is no action needed. But we will have a discussion on the item if so chosen. The acting dean of the Graduate School, Jessica Reyman, is not able to join us, so I will give a brief overview of the proposal and open it up for conversation.

You’ll see the summary on page 28 of the packet. This proposal specifies that the dean of the Graduate School is a nonvoting member of the Graduate Council, except in those instances where there is a tie vote and it needs to be broken. A second change is that there is language that was cleaned up related to the University Libraries representative, removing the ex officio language. Third, the assistant vice provost for assessment and accreditation is added as an ex officio, nonvoting member for the purpose of sharing information on assessment and accreditation regulations and processes as they relate to curricular and policy proposals. As this is a first reading, there is just a discussion to occur at this point, if anybody has any questions or thoughts about this. Okay. If anybody does, in the meantime, between now and our next meeting, please don’t hesitate to reach out to myself or to Jessica Reyman for clarity or information.

B. Proposed amendment to FS Bylaws

Article 1, Membership of Faculty Senate

FIRST READING

Ben Creed, Faculty Senate President

Christina Abreu, Director, Center for Latino and Latin American Studies

Laura Johnson, Acting Director, Center for Nonprofit and NGO Studies

Thomas Skuzinski, Director, Institute for the Study of Environment, Sustainability and Energy

**B. Creed:** The second item up is another proposed amendment to Faculty Senate Bylaws. This is related to the membership of Faculty Senate. Again, this is a first reading, so there’s no vote, no motions or anything like that, it’s just a discussion. I will provide a quick overview before turning it over to the guests who are walking up. If you’re wondering why three people are walking this way, I’ve invited them to share a little bit. It’s not something to be worried about or disconcerted about.

This proposal updates the language related to the voting membership of the Faculty Senate, to use a single term, academic unit, rather than the three different terms currently used, which are in this same language, which is academic department and school. The updates align with language approved last year related to promotion and tenure changes in Article 8, which is a shift from department to academic unit as a broader coverage term. You’ll notice in the language we have academic units with curricular responsibilities [inaudible] those academic units have membership [inaudible]. Beyond aligning the language, this allows for Faculty Senate representation of the research centers, which deliver academic curriculum. Those are the Center for Black Studies; Center for Latino and Latin American Studies; Center for Nonprofit and NGO Studies; Center for Southeast Asian Studies; Institute for the Study of the Environment, Sustainability and Energy; and Center for the Study of Women, Gender and Sexuality. I’ve invited representatives of these centers and the institute to share a bit about the centers and why they believe this is important for their centers and the institute to have representation [inaudible].

**T. Skuzinski:** Thanks, President Creed, for all the tremendous time and energy given us throughout this process. It’s been really helpful. My name is Tom Skuzinski. I am the director of the Institute for the Study of the Environment, Sustainability and Energy. I’m really pleased to be here today with Dr. Christina Abreu, who has the Center for Latino and Latin American Studies, and Dr. Laura Johnson, who directs the Center for Nonprofit and NGO Studies. And we’re also happy to represent, in their absence, our other three colleagues who are center directors. They would be here if they could. I also want to thank Provost Elish-Piper and the Social Justice Committee members. A few weeks ago, they gave us a chance to kind of give this presentation to them and offered some really thoughtful comments and engaged us in some great conversation. So, thank you for your time on that. And thank you all for just giving us time today. This room is ridiculously warm, so I appreciate your attentiveness. If you need to get up and stretch or anything, we will not be offended by that at all – or get water – I don’t know what you do.

As the centers and institutes that function as academic units at NIU, we’re really excited about the opportunity to be a part of this body potentially. We do have a pretty short informational presentation. This isn’t one of those 15- to 20-minute academic talks. This is just a chance for you to learn a little more about us. We’ve often been struck by the fact that a lot of people just don’t know what we do, what the institutes and the centers do. And we’re really going to be focusing in two areas.

The first is that we are truly academic units in the same way as departments and schools. We do all of the similar functions that you do that I have listed up there. We do personnel review. We do budgeting, programming, advocacy. Basically, everything that is done in an academic unit that you would expect to see there, we have to do that, as well. I also want to be attentive to the fact that we’re unique from one another, and we’re unique from other departments and schools. We do have a strong focus on interdisciplinarity, and many of us serve as what you can think of as kind of identity centers for students and their various racial and ethnic identities, or the fact that they relate to things in the area of like environment and sustainability. So, in the same way that you wouldn’t have all of humanities or all of engineering or all of social sciences with a single representative on senate, it wouldn’t really make sense to have all of us lumped together as one center representative for all of us. With that, I’m going to turn it over to Dr. Abreu, and she’s going to offer a little more detail about who we are and what we do.

**C. Abreu:** Thanks, Tom. Thank you for your time. I do apologize that we’re using old school slide PowerPoint. I didn’t know this was an option. If I did, I would have gone that route of way cooler. So, apologies.

Okay, so, who we are. You’ve already heard a little bit – I won’t belabor going through our lengthy titles again, but we are six academic units under the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences. But I do want to note that we have faculty and faculty associates that represent the entire university, so we’ll cross colleges. And so, I’ll go into a little more detail about what it is that we do.

So, we kind of label this as how we fulfill the core functions of an academic unit and more. All of the centers and the institute, we have majors, we have minors, we have undergraduate and graduate certificates. And through that curricular programming, one of the things that we do a lot of is serve the university by offering general education courses. To give you an example, how many general education seats we offer, as an example, the Center for Latino and Latin American Studies each year offers roughly 400 general education seats. The Center for the Study of Women, Gender and Sexuality offers, similarly, about 400 general education seats. Tom, do you know how many you have?

**T. Skuzinski:** At least that many.

**C. Abreu:** At least that many, so we serve students across majors, across colleges, in offering general education courses to them. We have vast research portfolios and sponsored projects. And, in particular, a lot of the research that we support and encourage crosses disciplinary boundaries. And in that pursuit of interdisciplinary research, we pursue a lot of external funds through government funding, but also through private foundations. And because of that work, many of our centers, not only do we report to a college dean, but we also are accountable to the Division of Research and Innovation Partnerships. So, that’s the “and more” where we’re fulfilling the duties of a more traditional academic unit, but also being accountable and helping to fulfill the mission of RIPS.

Many of our units, we rely on jointly appointed faculty. So, we are not tenure homes, but our faculty are tenured and jointly appointed in departments, all of your departments. And then we also rely on faculty associates. And our faculty associates come, again, from all of the colleges throughout the university. We also, because of all of the courses that we offer, we hire instructors. We hire full-time instructors, also adjunct instructors. We hire graduate research and teaching assistants. And here’s an area where I think it’s important to note, because we do offer graduate certificates. We do not offer graduate degrees. And so, here’s an area where – I’ll skip a point and go down to “resource partners with other units.” We partner with your departments to hire many of your excellent graduate students, who then become teaching assistants for us, research assistants for us. So, in that way, we really think that we collaborate really well with the traditional departments.

We also offer academic and cultural programming, so we are small but mighty. Our budgets are modest, but we do so much with them, because we are continuously collaborating and partnering with units across disciplinary boundaries to do as much as we can with what we have available to us.

Others ways that we fulfill an academic mission: We offer to our students many engaged learning opportunities, through international experiences, study abroad opportunities, directed research. For example, the Center for Latino and Latin American Studies, we have the NIU Latinx Oral History Project, which is NEH funded, to digitizing the entirely of our collection. We offer internships. The Center for Nonprofit and NGO Studies is a good example of the variety of internships that our students do that serve the local and also broader community.

**L. Johnson:** Paid internships.

**C. Abreu:** Paid internships, yes. A lot of outreach, so outreach with nonprofits and other community partners. Tom, I’m sure, can talk more about that in the Q&A if you have questions. And then, as Tom mentioned also, we contribute to cultural awareness and provide support to students and their many different and overlapping and intersecting identities. And so, in that way, also we partner quite often with the cultural resource centers on our campus.

So, that’s a little snapshot of the work that we do at the centers and the institute. And we’re happy to take any questions that you might have about our ask and what we contribute to the campus.

**B. Creed:** With that, I will open up the discussion about the proposed amendment, the first reading, related to updating the membership of Faculty Senate. Emily.

**E. McKee:** Hi, Emily McKee. I’m here from Anthropology but I’m also joint appointed in environmental studies. And I just want to add one more point of why I think this is an important inclusion. Because I am here representing Anthropology. And the kinds of concerns and questions that colleagues in environmental studies have are often going to be different and aren’t as well represented. So, I think it’s important that we have somebody for the centers, as well, for all of the centers.

**B. Creed:** Perhaps the heat has taken it out of them. Again, similar to the first reading prior to this, if there are questions, comments, concerns, thoughts, ways to improve, please don’t hesitate to reach out to myself or our directors of our centers and institute. I appreciate the time and the thought that you all will give to this. I agree with Emily’s point, I’m not aligned with any of the centers, but I do believe there’s value in having the voices represented here and in other places. Thank you for the presentation, and I welcome the second reading at our next Faculty Senate meeting.

**T. Skuzinski:** Thank you.

**C. Abreu:** Thank you all.

[applause]

**X. FS-UC Rules, Governance and Elections Committee – report**

Emily McKee, FS/RGE Liaison/Spokesperson

A. 2025-26 President of Faculty Senate/Chair of University Council

Call for nominations

* Nominations will be taken from the Faculty Senate floor during the March 26 Faculty Senate meeting.
* Letters of acceptance of nominations are due in the Office of Faculty Senate by Friday, April 11, and can be emailed to Pat Erickson at [pje@niu.edu](mailto:pje@niu.edu).
* Letters of acceptance of nomination will be provided to Faculty Senate voting members via email by Wednesday, April 16, and also will be included in the April 23 Faculty Senate agenda packets.
* Election of the 2025-26 Faculty Senate president/University Council chair will be held during the April 23 Faculty Senate meeting.

**B. Creed:** That brings to the Faculty Senate-University Council Rules, Governance and Elections Committee. We do have a report, and I will turn it over to Emily to lead us through it.

**E. McKee:** We are opening the floor for nominations at this point. We need to take nominations for the position of Faculty Senate president for 2025-2026. The list of Faculty Senate members, who are eligible to be nominated, are in your agenda packet and also now on the screen. If you’d like to nominate someone, please go to the microphone to do that. Please tell us your name first, and then the person you wish to nominate. And after that, I’ll ask for a second.

**K. Whedbee:** Karen Whedbee, Department of Communication. I’d like to nominate Ben Creed.

**E. McKee:** Thank you. Do I have a second? Thank you [K.Staikidis]. Are there any other nominations? Okay, seeing no one going toward the mics, I’ll close the nominations. Letters of acceptance, including information on your qualifications and desire to serve are due by Friday, April 11, and can be emailed to Pat Erickson. Those letters will then be provided to all of us in Faculty Senate via email by Wednesday, April 16, and also will be in the packet for the April 23 Faculty Senate meeting. The election will then take place at that April 23 meeting.

B. Election of 2025-26 [Non-Union Faculty and Staff Grievance Pool](https://www.niu.edu/university-council/uc/niu-bylaws.shtml#article-5) – A Qualtrics ballot will be distributed to FS tenured/tenure track voting members following the meeting.

**E. McKee:** Next, we are asked to identify three tenured non-union faculty members to serve on the 2025-26 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 each selecting their own three representatives to serve in this grievance pool through their own processes. And a note of clarification that this is a distinct process from last month’s Faculty Senate meeting when we selected members to serve on the student grievance panel. The two grievance panels are distinct, and each have their own processes for selection.

For this election of three faculty members, a Qualtrics ballot will be used, and Pat will be emailing that ballot following this meeting, along with directions for completing it. And the ballot will have the names of nine randomly selected tenured non-union faculty members, and you will be asked to vote for three.

C. Faculty Personnel Advisor – Call for self-nominations

Nominee – Virginia Naples

Nominee – Carrie Kortegast

Faculty Senate members will elect the faculty personnel advisor at the April 23 Faculty Senate meeting.

**E. McKee:** The next item up is for self-nominations for the position of faculty personnel advisor. These self-nominations are included in your agenda packet for your information, and they’re up there, as well. Faculty Senate will be asked to elect a faculty personnel advisor at the April 23 meeting.

D. NIU representative to the Faculty Advisory Council to the IBHE

Nominee – Tiffany Puckett

Faculty Senate members will elect the faculty personnel advisor at the April 23 Faculty Senate meeting.

**E. McKee:** Our last item is the self-nomination for the position of NIU representative to the Faculty Advisory Council to the IBHE. This self-nomination is included in the agenda packet, as well, and up there on the screen. Faculty Senate will be asked to vote on approval of this nomination at the April 23 meeting.

That’s everything, thanks.

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

**XI. Items for Faculty Senate Consideration**

A. Updates from Undergraduate Affairs

Alicia Schatteman, Vice Provost for Academic Affairs

Randi Napientek, Director of Student-Athlete Support Services

**B. Creed:** I appreciate our two invited presenters being willing to flip so we could front load all that business and all the votes and all that kind of stuff. We have two items for Faculty Senate consideration. The first one is an update from Undergraduate Affairs. I think they’re both walking up. So, we have Alicia Schatteman, our vice provost for academic affairs; Randi Napientek, director of student-athlete support services.

**A. Schatteman:** And I’ll introduce Valerie in one second. We have a few announcements; and then I wanted to give you a couple of bookstore updates because we have Valerie here with us. I’ll touch on career services. Andrea Radasanu could not be here, so I’ll give some of those. And then Randi will talk.

Just by way of an announcement, we have TEDx NIU coming back to NIU. We can only sell 100 tickets, and I think we’ve sold 45 so far; so we only have about 55 to go. If you’re interested, tickets are $45. This is presented by our students. They organize the whole thing. It’s coming up Saturday, April 12.

Kaplan, we’ve talked about this in multiple different arenas. But, if you’re not familiar with this, you can go to [go.kaplan.com/illinois](https://go.kaplan.com/illinois). This is coming from ISAC, which is funded by the State of Illinois to provide free test prep courses to our undergrad and graduate students. They have access immediately. We launched this February 17. We have access at least through the end of 2025 pending further state budget. We hope to continue beyond that. There are over 40 courses for undergrad and graduate courses. We’ve sent this information out to chairs. We’ve sent it through the dean’s office, etc. If you want to learn more information, please go to that site.

I will introduce Valerie Hodge, Valerie.

**V. Hodge:** Hi there. My name is Valerie, as she said. I’m the store manager of the Huskies Books and Gear. If you guys haven’t been over there, if anybody’s new, we’re over at the Holmes Student Center on the first floor. And all faculty do get a ten percent discount on any merchandise, so make sure you let us know if you’re coming to shop, you’ll get a little bit of a discount.

You can reach out to me with any questions regarding merchandise. We do custom ordering, book ordering, anything like that, you can reach out to me. I think my email should be on the screen. It’s the [2089mgr@follett.com](mailto:2089mgr@follett.com).

Celeste Bryant is our course materials market manager. She handles all course materials, book adoptions, anything like that. Any of those questions are going to go to her. I know she just sent out an email recently for the summer adoptions. Those were due March 15, and we still have quite a few that are not in. That’s really important, because if we are not getting those adoptions submitted on time, we will not have those materials on time. So, just a note for that.

Coming up for fall, April 15 is the due date for the adoptions, so just want to mention that.

Other than that, we have some fun partnerships coming up with IKEA. That will be fun. We’re working on doing some extra departmental custom ordering, as well; so, if anybody has any questions about that, feel free to reach out.

**A. Schatteman:** Thanks, Valerie. And when Celeste sends out the reminders, it also goes through Follett Discover Blackboard. Where we’re having some issues is when faculty are putting in ISBNs and they’re not appropriate. So, we have to make sure that they’re the actual ISBN. The bookstore has a very challenging time to get books that are not the current edition. So, if you like using older editions, I get it, everybody likes to save money. But, they’re very hard for the bookstore to source. There’s not a lot of those in stock. So, please use Blackboard Discover. More faculty are using digital content, Courseware, in particular. And there are some new innovations coming in the fall with some of that. Sometimes we have challenges getting those digital materials into your courses, because they’re coming through different publishers. Some are coming on cardstock; some are coming by email; very strange things. So, look for some more improvements on that front.

We also need to know if you have no textbook, if you don’t need a textbook. Because it will just come back as missing, missing, missing. And also, to promote if you’re using Open Access resources, we also need to know that. The library uses these sources, so they will have some of your textbooks in stock. So, the earlier you adopt, it will also allow them.

As Ben said, I also represent Undergraduate Affairs. These are all the units that report up through the Provost’s Office, how we support undergraduate students here at NIU. Today we want to highlight a couple of them, one being Career Services, and one being SAASS.

Career Services, as I said, Andrea’s not here today, but I wanted to give you her email just so you have it. As a reminder, April 7-11 is Career Readiness Week. This is a new add for the Career Services unit. These are all the things they’ll be doing that week, talking about resume development; I’ll talk to you about some of the badges they’ve been working on; Career Services Clinic; mock interviews; all kinds of stuff. So, encourage your students to come.

They’re launching – and have launched – Huskie Career Launchpad on Suitable. For those of you who’ve been part of Honors or the College of Business, they have Passport in the College of Business, and Honors has their badges in Suitable. So, we’ve now added a third license for Suitable. So, the same thing, we’re going to be able to promote, and students can track all of their career development from the time they arrive here on campus. We’ll be introducing this to our new freshman over summer orientation.

This is what Career Launchpad looks like. The goal is to get them thinking about careers as soon as they get here, and all the way through their last semester and getting them into jobs. They’re going to do that in a number of different ways. We’re going to talk about career readiness competencies, so students have a really good idea of how to do that.

There are two badges, so far, set up; and there will be more rolled out over time. The first badge is basically how to get on Huskies Get hired. All of our internships and jobs are through Huskies Get Hired. As soon as students sign up, they get a little thing on their badge. And then looking at developing skills. Many of you are aware that we have stepping blocks on here, on our campus, so you can go in and put in what major you have and career options and all the salary expectations, all of those things. If you have any kind of course where it makes sense to be embedded in your course, that would be great. Please reach out to Andrea. She’s happy to talk to any department or faculty member who’s interested in embedding some of these badges.

And then our last one that they have launched is a Career Exploration Passport. We want to be able to encourage our students to go to these career fairs, make sure that they’re ready for those career fairs, connecting with professionals, and, again, some reflection on their career path. They’ve launched these two badges so far, and more to come.

The last thing is Quinncia. This is a tool that they just added in the last couple of months. It’s an AI-powered tool that allows students to submit their resume for an AI analysis. This is the same kind of software that companies are reviewing their resumes on the other end. So, we’re giving our students the ability to do that before they leave. They can also do AI mock interviews and a LinkedIn profile analysis. So, it’s on demand, whether it’s 2 o’clock in the morning when our students are doing stuff, they can use Quinncia, and you’ll hear more information about that. It’s the same company that other companies are using for hiring.

Career Services, currently, we’ve purchased 500 licenses for Quinncia. We can add some, but we’re doing a soft roll-out. If more students use it, we can get more licenses. So far, this is what we have. They’re good for one year, and they include unlimited resume. You can upload your resume 75 times, it doesn’t matter. The license is per individual. You get multiple reviews of your LinkedIn profile. And faculty can also adopt Quinncia using an ISBN number. So, if you want to make this as a required text, course material in your courses, you can do that, as well. Please reach out to Andrea if you’re interested in any of those career services items. And I’ll turn it over to Randi.

**R. Napientek:** Good afternoon. I’m Randi Napientek. I’m the director of Student Athlete Academic Support Services. I recognize a lot of you in here; we have worked together multiple times. I’m here to introduce myself, my office and how we can help support you and everything that you’re doing here on campus.

This slide was provided to me by our FAR, Dr. Hughes to talk about who student athletes are, what they’re doing on campus. Our student athletes are at the top tier of their sports. They’re doing a lot of things here, typically working about six days a week, reporting – honestly, some of them – at 6 a.m., working, doing different things. Some of our student athletes actually have jobs, as well, trying to help support themselves. They’re balancing schedules. I even had to change some schedules this week to help out with the weather as we’re having some outdoor sports here with softball. They’re balancing things with academics. We’re doing a lot of things, as well. They have to meet these academic thresholds. So, making sure that this is really important in the aspect that we can’t just withdraw from a course, change a major, do these kinds of these kinds of things, because of the NCAA regulations that are wrapped around these students, because they’re so highly regulated. This is really important with the communication with our office with regard to making sure that it’s early intervention and that we’re having constant communication with our staff around these students.

Just to give you an idea of that aspect of what’s going on with our students, what our office is, is a group that really works highly with these students. We know our students. We’re constantly communicating. As I was sitting here, my phone was blowing up, constant communication with the students. So, wanting to get to know who they are. Our office meets with student regularly; so, we’re having weekly meetings going over grades, creating task lists, what you have going on, what does your schedule look like this week. Some of those students who are first coming into school, how do we make this work? How do we make a plan? When are you going to do this? How does our schedule look?

We’re also going through and connecting students with resources, tutoring, academic coaching, getting them to learning the assistance programs, making sure that they have those types of resources that they need to be successful. In addition, we’re big on the academic engagement. So, we’ll talk about some of that stuff here in a minute, but making sure that our students have that engagement with their education. Making sure that they get to take part in a lot of these programs that we talked about with the Career Services. I’ve had students that participated in research rookies, that are doing big time research projects with faculty. We’re really proud of that, that our students get to take majors that they want to. One of the things that we have a lot – and the reason why we get the students that we do – is that a lot of students are told in their recruitment process, no, you can’t be a teacher. I’m sorry, you can’t be a nurse. Engineering, out of the question. At Northern, you get to do that. And that’s something that we take a lot of pride in, is that our students get to do that while they’re here, because of the amazing faculty that we have here and the amazing support system that you work with our students, they get to go do this, and we’re able to make that happen. A lot of programs in institutions around the country, don’t. So, that’s something that we take a lot of pride in, that they get that engagement, and they’re successful at it.

In addition, the eligibility monitoring, we look at those grades, we’re checking the eligibility, we’re checking the academic progress, to make sure that our students are doing what they need to be doing, they’re doing what they need to be in the classroom. If they’re not, we intervene quickly, and we’re able to get that stuff figured.

The enrollment assistance is something that we’re doing right now. Our students are out, they’re meeting with campus, they’re meeting with advisors, they come to us. “I don’t know if that class is going to work right now, let’s check and see. Can we move this? Is that something that can happen?” “Hmmm, anatomy and physiology right now when you’re going to be traveling and you’ve got games every single Tuesday, not the best option. Let’s see if that can be something we can take in the summer. Is that something we can move to the other semester.” Fighting to make sure they’re in your class. What can we do to make sure these are happening? Talking to the advisors and making sure we can get the best schedule. Knowing that things are the way they are right now. Maybe we have to take the option, and then I can go have that fight with the coach and say, no, this is what it’s going to be and this is how it’s going to be happening. So, we’re making sure that we’re avoiding things to the best that we can, and we’re graduating our students and being successful. Those are the things that we’re helping in our office to do.

In addition, we’re that person that the collaboration, the coordination and having those conversations. What does the student need? Sometimes, it’s that hard conversation for me. I’m going to be that parent. I’m going to be that conversation. Talking to the coaches. Talking to the student. Needing to be that person to make sure that they get what they need. Dr. Hughes and I have a lot of conversations with faculty, as well. “I’m having some struggling. Is there some travel in here? What’s the best way that I can do this?” “Maybe we can do a project like this. This works. Maybe we can do things this way.” So, having those conversations with faculty, staff and making sure that we’re able to get things with the ultimate goal of graduation.

Wanting to get Dr. Hughes’ picture. She’s actually sitting in the back over there. She’s what you call the faculty athletic rep, a great resource for you in here. She wants to make sure that we’re ensuring academic integrity with student success. That’s her main role in here. And she wants our students to thrive academically, as we all do in here. So, that’s one of her main roles, as well. She’s also the liaison with the athletic department and with campus. So, if there are ever any questions, she can help be that, as well as myself. We’re able to be there. You should never call a coach, and a coach should never call you. We’re there to make sure that there’s that line, and we can have those conversations and make those communications for you.

She also advocates to make sure that the students get that well-being so that they have academics, athletics and they get to be a student. They have that well-rounded piece, that their whole life is not consumed, and they get to have that well-rounded experience here. We have students that participate in research rookies, are research ambassadors. I love when I pick up the phone, “Hey, I’m out in the field doing research right now. I’m part of the Honors Program.” Or, we just sent five students overseas on a study abroad program over spring break. That is awesome. So, being able to have those experiences is something we take a lot of pride in. She’s also going to make sure that we uphold all of those NCAA rules and compliance, and that we are above board on everything.

In addition, we’re reporting back. So, you’re going to see reports, you’re going to see things that come out that talk about our graduation rates, our GPA. How is our retention? What are we doing, and are we above board in making sure that we’re completely transparent with what’s going on.

Again, what I would suggest is that, if you ever have problems or questions, Dr. Hughes is a great resource. “Hey, how would you do this?” She’s faculty. She’s out there teaching. Make sure to talk to her and how can you use her as that resource, as well.

Next steps – what I would suggest if you’re kind of like, how can we use staff, what are those things that we can use. We do progress reports three times a semester based on best practices within retention and student success. Use them. Put them out there. When we get those, we actually – not to brag – we do a really great job of closing those. I could text a student and get a response instantaneously. “What’s going on? Why are you not going to class? Why are you not sharing these homework assignments?” “I just didn’t know.” Well, that’s not an excuse. Let’s get in there. Let’s get you the tutor. Your faculty’s a great person. Let’s go to office hours and get this figured out, so we can get those responses quickly, close them, and make sure you get that information on what’s going on. And if you’re not, let me know, because I’m going to make sure my staff is doing it.

In addition, when campus is doing these, we get the alerts, as well. So, we’ll make sure that we’re getting them when you’re doing campus alerts. So, making sure you’re getting those communications to us.

In addition, Navigate alerts, anytime. It doesn’t need to be through progress reports. Just open up something in Navigate and send it to us, and we’ll make sure we get ahold of that student. I got one today. We’re not in progress reports. So, I chased down the student, got the answer, and I’m going to close it here shortly.

In addition, if you’re in Blackboard and you’re using it, make sure that you’re keeping things updated. If it’s something easy, I can go in. We just had to change the softball schedule on Friday, so, I immediately went in, was checking – oops, okay, this isn’t going on, there’s no grades, nothing happening. It’s a quick way for me to see what’s going on. Or, fortunately, there is a transfer portal. I just had three guys enter today. I was able to go in, see what’s happening, because I need to know what’s happening in their life as I have to hold onto them for the end of the semester. So, it’s able for me to see what do the grades look like, how can I check stuff and have those snapshots as things are going on. So, it’s able for me to have those updates. If not, I’ll just send off emails. But, just like that, call or email me anytime. I have no problem checking in. Call my staff. We’re here for open communication anytime if you need anything.

**A. Schatteman:** And that’s it. We’re just here for questions. Any questions or comments? Anything Undergraduate Affairs-ish?

**T. Atkins:** Hi, Taylor Atkins, History. Just purely for my own curiosity, what is the graduation rate for.

**R. Napientek:** I printed it. Mr. Sean Frazier sent out a really great report. If anybody wants to see that, it went out yesterday in what he calls Frazier’s Corner. There is some really great information that went out there. We have two graduation rates that we get to send out. One is called the graduation success rate because, transfer portal, students are leaving and coming and going. So, we have what we call the graduation success rate. Those students come off if they go pro or if they go to another school. Our graduate success rate was 88 percent last year. Because those students leave and go to other institutions, so they go under that institution. It’s good, we’re real proud of that.

If you go to the federal rate, which then compares apples to apples, which is NIU’s rate to NIU’s regular student rate, we were at 68 percent. And the regular student population was at 50 percent. So, we were 18 percent higher than the general population of students. So, we’re just about 20 percent higher than the regular population of students.

And then our GPA last year was at 3.408, which was the highest GPA we’ve ever had with our students.

**T. Atkins:** That’s terrific, keep up the good work.

**R. Napientek:** Thank you.

**B. Creed:** Related maybe in my mind to that, as well, I know in certain areas where you use data to identify patterns and areas for further supports, how are we leveraging the insights from the work that you’re doing with the student athletes for the non-student athlete population. Are there ways that we’re ingesting and learning and scaling out those supports?

**A. Schatteman:** Yeah, I would say, shameless plug, we don’t do a lot of the outreach, I would say, that SAASS gets to do, on all of our students. They do rely heavily on Navigate alerts, and so do we. Just so you know, about 40 percent of our faculty use Navigate. It should be much, much higher. So, that’s a plug. Please tell your folks to please use Navigate alerts. I think we’ve done a really good job in looking at the cases and getting those students doing outreach, literally knocking on a door sometimes. Now that doesn’t mean they’re going to all of a sudden go to class. But it means that we’ve done all we can. We’ve reached out to Student Affairs if they’re in housing. We’ve reached out to their CSA. We’ve done all of those things. But, if we don’t hear from you, then we don’t know where the issues are. Also, the more people that submit Navigate, it gives us trends and a bigger picture; because sometimes if we get one, we’re like, oh one, they just don’t like fill-in-the-blank. If we get five for the same student, then we know something’s going on, and we can do a little bit more intentionality. So, we are using those pieces to help us with other students.

**C. Hughes:** I just thought I’d add to Ben’s question. It’s interesting you ask that, because we’re actually, I’m doing a research study right now with a dean at Western Michigan University, but she was the faculty athletics representative there. And we’re doing that very thing, where we’re looking at the practices of Athletics, because there’s a lot of best practices happening, and seeing how that can be translated to campus as a whole. When that comes out, I’ll share that information.

**B. Creed:** Thank you. Thank you so much for the presentation and the information.

B. Budget update

Laurie Elish-Piper, Executive Vice President and Provost

George Middlemist, Vice President for Administration and Finance

& Chief Financial Officer

**B. Creed:** Next up is our budget update, and we have Executive Vice President and Provost Laurie Elish-Piper and Vice President for Administration and Finance & the CFO, George Middlemist, to talk us through that.

**L. Elish-Piper:** We wanted to remind everyone that we do have the budget website, and if you’ve not visited there, wanted to make sure you knew what the URL was. We continue to update information. The timeline that we’re going to be talking about today will show up there under the tab, Next Fiscal Year. So, as George and I go through this information, you can click there and get additional details.

Just want to remind everyone that, as we’re thinking about building our budget using a modified zero-based budgeting process, that we want to keep in mind that we are preparing an academically responsive and a fiscally responsible budget. And that, as we make decisions, we want to make sure that we keep that frame of reference in mind.

In terms of why we’re doing this, the Board of Trustees approved a budget plan for us that required us to have a balanced budget plan by the time that fiscal year ’26 begins. So, we are working hard to honor that request, that expectation from the Board of Trustees. And also to remind you that the HLC, when we had our visit, we were reaccredited; but, we need to provide an interim report related to budget, and that’s due in October of 2026. And that will show us the progress that we’re making toward that balanced budget. So, just wanted to remind you of those external expectations regarding the budget process.

Want to provide a little bit of context, because context matters. And we’re in a very strange context. When we think about – I want to talk about the state update first, because we’re hearing a lot about the impact of what’s going on in the federal government, but there are also some things happening at the state level that play a role in terms of our budget situation.

I want to let you know that the funding formula bill that’s been talked about for the last couple of years, that is designed to provide equitable, adequate, sustainable funding for universities, is actually in a place where it’s beginning to be reviewed and considered through the legislative process in Springfield. So, we’re cautiously optimistic that, if that gets passed this year, that will be an important step toward a better budget model for higher education. But we also understand that, if it is approved, that does not necessarily mean that there is funding to immediately begin providing additional funding. And so, the assumption is that this is probably going to be a multi-year process. For those of you who are aware of the equity-based funding formula for K-12, it’s taken a number of years for the state to actually implement and provide the additional funding to get out into the schools. We anticipate that, if Senate Bill 13 is passed, that there would likely be a runway in terms of the time needed to provide that funding. Based on the model in the funding formula, NIU would benefit, because there will be a consideration for the populations of students that you serve. For example, serving a lot of first-generation students, serving a lot of students who are PELL eligible, those sorts of things we know require additional resources, and the funding model would take that into consideration and would likely benefit NIU in terms of its appropriation. But we’re waiting for that to work its way through the legislative session.

We do have our appropriation hearings on the 22nd and the 24th of April, where George and President Freeman and I, John Acardo, our chief HR officer, Katie Davison, our state relations director, will all be down in Springfield. We’ll be meeting with the House and with the Senate to present our budget request and also to answer questions that they might have. That will then go into their deliberation processes, and we will not find out until May what our state appropriation looks like. So, I wanted to share that context, because those pieces are important, but have probably not been talked about as much as what’s going on at the federal level.

The bullet points that we have up there – we know that there are a number of things going on that create uncertainty regarding federal funding. We know the impact that’s happening in terms of research and in terms of federal contracts. Wanted to share that we also know a number of institutions are also dealing with – well, really all institutions are dealing with these kinds of issues. To just share a few, perhaps some of the more current ones that you may not be aware of. You may or may not have seen that the University of Wisconsin just put out a communication that they are expecting all of their units to prepare for a five to ten percent decrease in their budget. When we think about many of the institutions that have been dealing with budget, many of the flagships are now dealing with this, many private institutions, many very prestigious institutions, that historically we have not heard about having budget challenges, are finding that the federal landscape is creating a context wherein they’re having to make difficult decisions related to their budget, as well.

Stanford has done freezing of hiring. The University of Pennsylvania has reduced graduate admissions. A number of universities have stopped admitting graduate students, specifically doctoral students, because they don’t have funding to be able to support them. Louisville has frozen all hiring for faculty, in that case, as well as staff. And Cornell has frozen hiring and is asking departments to prepare to cut costs. So, I’m sharing that just to say the context that we find ourselves in is not a context that is unique to NIU or unique to Illinois, but it is a broad context that is taking place really across higher education at large at this moment.

**G. Middlemist:** I’d also add that the federal uncertainty is also impacting the state. States get a lot of funding from the feds, so that creates also downward pressure on higher education, especially when you think about programs like Medicaid.

**L. Elish-Piper:** You may or may not have seen in the press that about 25 percent of Illinois residents receive Medicaid. And so, if our Medicaid funding, as a state, is reduced, it has an enormous impact and could put extreme pressure on the state budget. Thank you for that, George.

I want to share with you, as we’re working on our budget process, some aspects of it that are really important and that are different as we look at this approach that we’re using this year, which is new to what we’ve done in the past. Want to make sure that we’re focused on alignment. Alignment with the university mission and vision and goals. Wanting to make sure that our budgets are aligned with the priorities of divisions so that we’re making sure that in resource-constrained times, we’re using those resources to invest in those most important priorities, keeping that frame of reference top of mind through the process.

In addition to that, effectiveness. Wanting to make sure that, through this process, if we’re identifying particular programs or units that have developed highly effective approaches or initiatives, that we’re aware of what those are so that we can use those as models to improve or to increase efficiencies elsewhere on campus.

In addition to that, looking at efficiencies broadly, thinking about ways that we can use technology, thinking about ways that we can redesign or reorganize things in order to be more efficient. All of those things are top of mind as we go through the budget process.

We’re also asking each of the divisions, as they prepare their budget requests, to be thinking about this set of descriptors. Thinking about the criticality of the need, of the particular budget item or budget activity. Thinking about those things that are most critical to ensure that they rise to the top and that they’re given the most serious consideration for funding. Those that are high impact, those that have moderate impact, or those that have less impact. It’s really a prioritization process for divisions to really think about. What are the most essential things that we absolutely have to do, that are critical to our operation: They are required by accreditation; they are required for compliance; they are required because they are central and core to the mission. And, as you go down that list and you see some of those lower impact things might be things that are nice to do or nice to have, but that perhaps are not possible for us to have at this particular moment in time. So, that prioritization process is a new element that’s been added into the budget process that will guide our decisions and guide our thinking to ensure that we are aligning our resources with those priorities.

**G. Middlemist:** I’m just going to talk about the process that we’ve developed to distribute the budget materials and then bring them back in, and how we want to consider all of the information that we get. The first thing is actually already happening. We’ve sent out – it’s a different resource now, because we’re doing a different process – but we’ve sent out decision packets to all of the divisions. And then they’ve taken those and distributed down to the lower units, to begin to build their budgets from the ground up. And so, that’s taking place right now. It will go from now until early April. In early April, Academic Affairs will submit their decision packets to the Budget Office. And then the other areas will submit about a week later to the Budget Office.

The Budget Office is going to use that time to compile in mid-April, make sure that the numbers add up, make sure if there’s revenue assumptions, that they make sense, to do a little bit of analysis. Not to weigh in on the importance of what the activities are, but to weigh in on what the numbers look like. They will submit that in late April to the provost, to the president, to myself, to the chief strategy officer, the chief HR officer and our chief communication strategist.

We’ll get together and review all those packets. In late April, we’ll meet with each of the division leaders who have submitted packages to really understand how they have come up with the information, how they’ve come up with the numbers, the priorities, all of that, to be able to really learn the potential outcomes of decisions that we would be making. And use that time to sit down, the president, the provost and myself, will meet in late April to begin to develop some options. We don’t want to say these are the things that we’re going to fund. But we want to create some options or scenarios on, here’s a set of decisions that we could make. Here are consequences potentially with those decisions, put those together; and then in early May, begin meeting with different areas to provide these options and this information and to get feedback. So, the first, in early May, we’ll meet with the senior roundtable to let them know, here’s what we had received, here’s our recommendations for scenarios, here are the scenarios we’ve developed. We want your feedback.

We’ll gather feedback. Then we’ll take it to the deans right after the senior roundtable, do the same exercise and, in that meeting, also be able to share some of the feedback that we had received from the senior roundtable. And then after that meeting, to go to the Resources, Space and Budget Committee, Academic Planning Council and the President’s Budget Roundtable all in one meeting to share, again, all the different scenarios and now feedback we’ve received from Senior Roundtable and the deans, to give their feedback.

And then we’ll spend the next couple of weeks really thinking through that feedback to be able to make a recommendation on what we think the budget should be for the Board of Trustees’ consideration. In early June, the budget will be posted, so our recommended budget will be posted on June 9 – I should know that, it’s my anniversary, folks. And then the trustees will take the budget up for consideration on June 12. And then the fiscal year will begin on July 1, 2025, with a new budget.

The one thing I would add that’s not in this slide is that we’re really hoping to bring this timeline even further up so that we have more time to really think through and build the budget. So, next year, our intention is to begin the budget process in September, to give us plenty of time to think through and be able to communicate all these different things that we’re working through.

**L. Elish-Piper:** George, I’m just going to jump in. George kind of zipped through. I just wanted to highlight that, when we have the opportunity, I believe it’s on May 12, to meet with the Resources, Space and Budget Committee, that we’ll be meeting with shared governance through the Resources, Space and Budget Committee – that ad hoc group – and then also through the Academic Planning Council. Because of that earlier comment that I made about the importance of having a budget as academically responsive and fiscally responsible, making sure that the APC has an opportunity to weigh in. And also the shared leadership group, the President’s Budget Roundtable. And we want to make sure that, through that process then, we can leverage the insights and the input from those groups. So, I just wanted to clarify that a little bit.

**G. Middlemist:** Accountant, I just want to get straight to the point. At this point, I think we could entertain any questions, answer whatever you might have.

**S. Vahabzadeh:** Good afternoon, this is Sahar Vahabzadeh from Mechanical Engineering Department. You provided some examples about the freezing that is happening nationwide. I was wondering what is the status for our university, because we are receiving some freezing of the new faculties. Although, we have lost, for example, some of the faculties have left, and we expected to rehire or hire to fill those positions. And also, if freezing is happening, is that throughout the whole university or only there are a couple of units that are facing that?

**L. Elish-Piper:** There is not a hiring freeze. There is not a faculty hiring freeze at this point. We are going through the position control process that John Acardo came and talked to the group about earlier in the semester. I don’t remember the specific time in the semester, but it was earlier in the semester. What we are seeing is that some individual faculty searches that were in process have not yielded candidates; and so, decisions are being made about not filling positions because they didn’t have strong pools. Or, individual units are making decisions that they have rethought and don’t want to proceed with those hires. So, those are decisions that are being made locally.

In terms of what might be happening for next year, in the budget process, we are asking each of the deans to begin having conversations, to begin thinking about what priority hires they might be looking for, in terms of faculty. We anticipate that the likelihood will be that we will be able to hire very few faculty next year. But we want folks to begin thinking about that so that, as we prioritize, we’re identifying those positions that are most vital, that are most critical, that are most essential for us to be able to hire. So, at this point, there is not a hiring freeze. I just wanted to clarify that.

**S. Vahabzadeh:** Thank you. I will inform my department. Thank you.

**B. Creed:** I’ve had a lot of opportunity to provide feedback and questions. I think one of the points to be made, or just to clarify, it’s all divisions, regardless of division. They all are being tasked with the same ask of reducing expenditures or increasing revenues, right?

**G. Middlemist:** Yes, that’s correct, we’re asking everybody to go through the same process. And that’s part of the process in the middle when the provost, the president, myself, the chief strategy officer, the others, meet with the different divisions, to make sure that they have actually gone through this exercise and done what they can to reduce their budgets.

**B. Creed:** All right, I think that might be the end of discussion for this. And I will just reiterate things that both Laurie and George have shared before with me, and I think with this group, as well. If you do have questions or comments, please do feel invited to attend office hours or to reach out and find a time to connect on a conversation. So, thank you both.

**XII. Reports from Councils, Boards and Standing Committees**

A. Faculty Advisory Council to the IBHE – report

Tiffany Puckett, NIU representative to FAC-IBHE

**B. Creed:** That brings us to reports from councils, boards and standing committees. Our first one is the Faculty Advisory Council to the IBHE. I see Tiffany walking on up.

**T. Puckett:** Good afternoon, I hope everyone is well. I do have a few things to report from the last couple of Faculty Advisory Council meetings. This last meeting was held this past Friday, and it was sponsored by DeVry University. DeVry’s president did do a presentation. She had just gotten off a plane from D.C., literally, from having conversations around the different executive orders and funding with other presidents from around the country. So, she spent some time talking about the impact on her university, as well as just thoughts about it.

Also, in that meeting, we discussed that the representative from IBHE, Jill Gebke, discussed that the State is moving forward with the [DFI Fellowship](https://www.ibhe.org/dfifellows.asp). For those of you who have DFI Fellows, Diversifying Faculty in Illinois, fellow students in your courses, they will be receiving funding this year. She also reported that there’s been an increase in cyber-security programs around the state, where students are more interested in, so universities are creating those.

Our legislative liaison gave a report on bills. The ones that have been discussed here lately have been the higher ed funding bill. They’re still in committee and having some discussion around that. There’s also been a discussion about the community college bachelor’s degree bill. It’s still in committee. There’s been really no movement on that.

**L. Elish-Piper:** There is an update. Hot off the press. Actually, a determination was made by the committee chair not to bring the bill for a vote. And so, it’s kind of dead in committee. We anticipate that it will likely appear again in a different form. We’re in conversations with the community colleges and the governor’s office about what an updated or a different bill might look like, to try and accomplish the goal of making programs accessible to individuals who are at community colleges, who might not have ready or easy access to a degree completion program. But the original bill kind of was – it didn’t come out of committee, which means, basically, it’s dead.

**T. Puckett:** Thank you – hot off the press, right, Friday to Wednesday. So, yes, but the FAC chair did present a statement at the last IBHE meeting opposing the bill, and FAC issued resolutions that are opposing the bill to the bill’s sponsors and to IBHE.

Also, the IBHE voted on a resolution that passed, that was going to be sent to IBHE, that they continue to support and promote diversity, equity and inclusion across the state.

There was also a lot of discussion around – I don’t know if you’ve been following this – in April of last year, Title II of ADA was amended where it will require that all digital content be accessible. And so the universities and institutions have been having conversation around what schools are using to make sure that material is accessible and who is responsible for that. A lot of schools are using Blackboard and OLLIE tools within Blackboard.

Also, another update, the prior learning assessment survey that went out, it’s a prior learning assessment for the institutions across the state where FAC wants to see how the different institutions are handling prior learning assessment. I did meet with Vice Provost Alicia Schatteman, and we did complete that. And so, NIU is participating in that survey, and that survey information has been provided.

Our next meeting is going to be April 25, and that meeting is going to be hosted by Joliet Junior College.

Does anybody have any questions?

**B. Creed:** Thank you for your work.

**T. Puckett:** Thank you.

B. University Advisory Committee to the Board of Trustees – report

Felicia Bohanon, Natasha Johnson, Ben Creed

Brad Cripe, Larissa Garcia, Tom Skuzinski

**B. Creed:** That brings us up to the UAC to the BOT. There have been three BOT meetings since our last meeting of the Faculty Senate: February 20 and February 27, and then again on March 20. I’m not going to cover the February 20 meeting, because that’s years ago, it seems. But the February 27 meeting, that was a special meeting of the BOT that approved the move of non-football sports to the Horizon League.

At the most recent meeting on March 20, sabbaticals were approved for the upcoming academic year. There was a presentation from the foundation related to progress in the current campaign, as well as updates related to moving it toward the public phase of that fundraising campaign.

We also heard updates about the revitalization of Greek life and the related efforts related to that.

That is my report for UAC.

C. Baccalaureate Council – no report

Alicia Schatteman, Vice Provost for Academic Affairs

**B. Creed:** We do not have a report from the Baccalaureate Council.

D. Faculty Rights and Responsibilities Committee – no report

Therese Arado, Chair

**B. Creed:** Or from the Faculty Rights and Responsibilities Committee.

E. Social Justice Committee – report

Ben Creed, FS President

**B. Creed:** The Social Justice Committee’s report is pretty brief. We had the centers come and share some information about that. We also talked about some efforts to identify opportunities to support all faculty on campus.

F. Student Government Association – no report

Ja’kobe Jones, SGA President

Manny Corpuz, Speaker of the Senate

**B. Creed:** I don’t know if we have an SGA report. I do not see Manny.

G. Operating Staff Council – no report

Natasha Johnson, President

**B. Creed:** Then Operating Staff Council, I don’t think we have a report from them.

H. Supportive Professional Staff Council – no report

Felicia Bohanon, President

**B. Creed:** SPS Council, I believe there is no report, either. Thank you, Tom.

**XIII. Information Items**

A. [Policy Library](https://www.niu.edu/policies/) – Comment on Proposed Policies

B. [Minutes](https://www.niu.edu/university-council/committees/minutes/apc/index.shtml), Academic Planning Council

C. [Minutes](https://www.niu.edu/university-council/committees/minutes/athletics/index.shtml), Athletic Board

D. [Minutes](https://www.niu.edu/university-council/committees/minutes/bc/index.shtml), Baccalaureate Council

E. [Minutes,](http://www.niu.edu/board/meetings/index.shtml) Board of Trustees

F. [Minutes](https://www.niu.edu/university-council/committees/minutes/ciuae/index.shtml), Comm. on the Improvement of the Undergraduate Academic Experience

G. [Minutes](https://www.niu.edu/university-council/committees/minutes/gec/index.shtml), General Education Committee

H [Minutes](https://www.niu.edu/university-council/committees/minutes/gc/index.shtml), Graduate Council

I. [Minutes](https://www.niu.edu/university-council/committees/minutes/hc/index.shtml), Honors Committee

J. [Minutes](https://www.niu.edu/operating-staff-council/meetings/index.shtml), Operating Staff Council

K. [Minutes](https://www.niu.edu/spsc/meetings/index.shtml), Supportive Professional Staff Council

L. [Minutes](https://www.niu.edu/university-council/committees/minutes/uap/index.shtml), University Assessment Panel

M. [Minutes](https://www.niu.edu/university-council/committees/minutes/ubc/index.shtml), University Benefits Committee

N. [Minutes](https://www.niu.edu/university-council/committees/minutes/uciel/index.shtml), University Committee on Initial Educator Licensure

O. [Minutes](http://www.facibhe.org/meetings/minutes.php), Faculty Advisory Council to the IBHE

P. 2024-25 FS meeting dates: Mar 26, Apr 23

Q. [Spring Commencement](https://www.niu.edu/commencement/)

Graduate School – Friday, May 9, 4 p.m.

Undergraduate – CLAS, CEET, CVPA – Saturday, May 10, 10 a.m.

Undergraduate – CEDU, CBUS, CHHS – Saturday, May 10, 2 p.m.

**B. Creed:** That brings us to informational items. A through O are the standard ones. You’ll note our last meeting of the academic year is April 23. You’ll see item Q are the dates for spring commencement, which Provost Elish-Piper shared earlier, and we’ll be sharing out that slide deck, as well.

**XIV. Adjournment**

**B. Creed:** That brings us to the end of the meeting. Thank you all for those who stuck with us in this hot room. Can I have a motion to adjourn the meeting.

**Unidentified:** So moved.

**B. Creed:** All right. We’ll assign that appropriately. All in favor, say aye.

**Members:** Aye.

**B. Creed:** Thank you all.

Meeting adjourned at 4:40 p.m.