TRANSCRIPT – FACULTY SENATE

**Wednesday, October 30, 2024, 3 p.m.**

**Altgeld Hall Auditorium**

**Northern Illinois University**

**DeKalb, Illinois**

**VOTING MEMBERS PRESENT:** Akst, Arado, Atkins, Barrett, Bender, Bohanon, Books, Boswell, Brain, Burton, Cain, Campbell, Cefaratti, Chan, Chomentowski, Creed, Duffin, Ehsani, Finch, Fotovat, Hartenhoff, Isawi (for Nyunt), Ito, Kushimo, Lampi, Libman, Luo, McGowan, McKee, Mills, Nesterov, Palese, Sabio, Salimi, Sharp, Sibley, Sirotkin, Slagstad, Sryglar (for Alex), Staikidis, Stalcup, Thomas, Thurmaier, Valentiner, VanTilburg, Wang, Whedbee, Woods, Yang

**VOTING MEMBERS ABSENT:** Alex, Corpuz, Dada, Demir, Naples, Novak, Nyunt, Rajabi, Ruetsche, Ross, Slotsve, Swedlow, Vahabzadeh, Van Wienen

**OTHERS PRESENT:** Bryan, Elish-Piper, Hughes, Middlemist, Puckett, Schatteman, Sumner

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

**I. Call to Order**

**B. Creed:** All right, I did that extra loud today. I would like to call to order today’s meeting of Faculty Senate on Wednesday, Oct. 30. I have 3 p.m., so we’ll go ahead and get the meeting started.

**II. Verification of Quorum**

**B. Creed:** Pat, can you verify that there’s a quorum.

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

**III. Adoption of the Agenda**

**B. Creed:** So, then we need to adopt the agenda. Can I have a motion to adopt the agenda? Thank you, Pete. And a second? David, second. All in favor of adopting the agenda for today’s meeting, please say aye.

**Members:** Aye.

**B. Creed:** Opposed? All right, our agenda is approved.

**IV. Approval of the October 2, 2024, minutes**

**B. Creed:** Next up is approval of the October 2, 2024, minutes. Can I have a motion to approve the minutes? Thank you, Felicia. And a second? Thank you, Cynthia. They are on pages 4 through 7. Any comments, edits, corrections? Hearing none, all in favor of approving the October 2, 2024, minutes, please say aye.

**Members:** Aye.

**B. Creed:** Opposed? Abstain? All right, our minutes are approved.

**V. Public Comment**

**B. Creed:** That brings us to public comment. 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. Before I get started, you’ll notice in the packet, there is going to be a vote today. If you haven’t picked up a clicker, please do so at some point.

I have three, hopefully quick, announcements. The first one is an update on the Qualtrics results – the results of that invitation for folks to volunteer for the four tasks that I had put out there. We’ve gotten a number of responses, 13 survey responses, and a couple of one-off emails or conversations. We’ve identified individuals for each of the tasks, and I sent out emails before the meeting today. We have four folks who will be serving as Faculty Senate reps on the AI Task Force. We have three that will be partnering or working with prevention, outreach in education in a collaborative effort to help inform their work from the perspective of faculty and staff. We have three folks who have volunteered to look at promotion and tenure, different aspects that were identified last year for review. And then we have three folks who have volunteered to work on the service component, looking at service and leadership and how do we measure it, how do we ensure it’s equitable on campus. There were two responses to the survey that didn’t have names; so, if you didn’t get an email from me and you wanted to serve, please let me know that you were one of those responses. And if you didn’t fill out the survey and you haven’t reached out to me, please let me know if you’d like to serve in any of those tasks. Just really appreciate the effort to continue thinking about ways to improve our policies, our practices and the campus, generally.

The second update is related to the Ad Hoc RSB Committee. It will be stood up under University Council. I just wanted to circle back to that and share that we are working to schedule its first kick-off meeting this semester; and then next semester, there will be monthly meetings. Representation on that body includes faculty, staff, students, department chairs, college- and university-level administration. And that group will be engaged in relevant and timely conversations including deficit mitigation strategy, capital planning, master space plan and other major projects and efforts related to resource, space and budget. If you have any questions, please don’t hesitate to reach out to me between now and when that committee is stood up.

The final thing I wanted to share is that one of the goals I shared, both in my letter accepting this position back in the spring, as well as in the first meeting here, is that a goal that I have is to build collaboration, information and communication, and to do that across campus, to find different ways that we can help move NIU forward. One of the things I want to do in this part of the schedule is to highlight one of those efforts that’s kind of going on behind the scenes that folks may not know about. I want to elevate something that’s going on by either faculty senators or the committees or councils or anything else that falls underneath that umbrella.

The first one I want to elevate today is work related to coordination between the undergraduate and graduate components of our campus. I’ve been working with the Baccalaureate Council and the Graduate Council, as well as other key individuals to find points for collaboration, coordination, to better support our students, better support our faculty and make these systems, these parts of our academic enterprise in alignment while still retaining and allowing for that uniqueness that is the undergraduate experience versus the graduate experience. And so, I just want to let folks know that one of those changes that we’ll be voting on later today, which is the recognition that there needs to be additions to the duties for the BC and the GC that are in alignment with one another. But there will be other efforts coming out of that working group or that collaboration that this body will see or you may hear about across campus. I just want to elevate that work that’s going on to coordinate key aspects of the academic enterprise.

Those are the updates and announcements that I have for today.

**VII. Provost’s Announcements**

**B. Creed:** And that brings us to our next item, which is the provost’s announcements. I’d like to welcome up Provost Elish-Piper.

**L. Elish-Piper:** Thank you. I just have two quick announcements. I want to remind everyone that registration begins on November 4, that’s Monday. Encourage your students to register. If they need to meet with their advisors or if they need to meet with others on campus, encourage them to do that early so they can go ahead and get registered for spring.

This next one, I probably don’t need to remind you, but I will, that on Tuesday, Election Day, we do not have classes. The university will remain open, but there will not be classes on that date.

There are a number of other academic-related announcements, but my colleague, Alicia Schatteman, will share those during her item related to the Baccalaureate Council.

**B. Creed:** Thank you.

**VIII. Items for Faculty Senate Consideration**

A. Budget Update

Laurie Elish-Piper, Executive Vice President and Provost

George Middlemist, Vice President for Administration & Finance and

Chief Financial Officer

**B. Creed:** That brings us to the budget update, which will be shared by our executive vice president and provost, Laurie Elish-Piper, and our vice president for administration & finance and CFO, George Middlemist.

**L. Elish-Piper:** Thank you. I wanted to provide a little bit of context regarding the update that we’re going to share, and thank you for the opportunity to do that today for Faculty Senate. First, I want to confirm that we continue to work from the budget planning resource group that made a number of recommendations, and much of the work we’re doing follows the recommendations that they offered to our campus a couple of years ago.

In addition to that, I want to confirm that we continue to work toward what was approved by the Board of Trustees in terms of reducing the budget deficit by half for 2025 and then eliminating the budget deficit in fiscal year ’26.

In addition to that, I want to remind everyone that, when our HLC accreditors visited our campus in the spring, the one area where they are asking us to do interim reporting relates to our finances. And that report will be due in October of 2026.

And so, all of those things are coming together and creating that context for the work that we’re engaged in. If you look at this particular slide, it provides an overview of what George and I are going to talk about today. We’re going to talk a little bit about how we ended fiscal year ’24. We’re going to talk a little bit about how we’re tracking for the current fiscal year, fiscal year ’25. Within that, we’re going to share a summary of the budget mitigation strategies that we have been, and the we are currently, engaged in, in implementing, as well as some that are just getting started. We’re also going to talk about university goals and the ways in which university goals will continue to move this work forward. We’ll also talk about shared governance and shared leadership, the way that those types of groups are involved in the process related to budget and addressing the budget deficit. And then finally, we will talk about any questions or comments or concerns or ideas that you have, as well. So, that’s basically a summary of where we’re going to go. So, I’m going to step away and let George talk a little bit about where we ended and where we are in terms of the budget.

**G. Middlemist:** We kept it pretty basic. There’s more detail in the board items. And we’re also working on a budget website to have all this information in a little bit more robust fashion. We hope to have that launched by the end of December if I remember correctly.

Fiscal year ’24 we had about $403, almost $404 million worth of revenues, and we had about $434 million worth of expenses. So, we ended the year with about a $30.4 million deficit. I didn’t want to put too many numbers on the slide, because I thought it got confusing. At the beginning of fiscal year ’24, our planned deficit was about $32 million, a little over $32 million; and, as the year went on, it actually grew a little bit. But we were able to do a few things to bring that number down, so we ended better than what we had been projecting, but still at a $30 million budget deficit.

This is the board approved budget that was approved in June. We have projected $423 million, almost $424 million, worth of revenues and about $439 million worth of expenses. So, we’ve reduced the budget deficit to about $15-and-a-half million, a little less than that. We’re working really hard trying to bring that number down during the year. We’ll talk about what we’re doing in a minute. But that’s kind of where we’re planning. Currently, as we look at where we sit, we’ve just finished the first quarter of the year, and we’re tracking a little bit better than the $15.4 million. We’re actually tracking a little less than $15 million in terms of the deficit. I consider the first quarter way too early to predict where we’re going to end up being, but I’m fairly confident we’ll still see that number shrink a little bit. If there are no questions on that, we’ll go to the next slide.

**L. Elish-Piper:** We want to talk a little bit about some of the actions and that we will be taking. The path to strategic personnel decisions – we’ve been working this past semester to reduce the amount of extra help and overtime and add pays. And we’ve been implementing those pretty effectively, making some progress in that area. One of them that’s listed there is the strategic refilling of positions or the restructuring of positions, making those kinds of decisions. In order to engage in a more strategic approach, the senior round table has had an opportunity to talk about how we can create a model for strategic personnel decisions. We’re using a tool called a MAP, a memo to advise the president. This particular tool puts forward a proposal and then provides an opportunity for input from different groups. So, senior roundtable had a chance to discuss it yesterday. Today we discussed it with the deans. Tomorrow we’re going to discuss with the president’s budget roundtable. That’s a shared leadership group that has representation from across campus, including faculty representation. And then, we’ll also be sharing with University Council next Wednesday, which will provide an opportunity to get input from lots of different constituent groups.

The idea behind that memo to advise the president is an opportunity to develop a plan that takes input into consideration from across campus, but then that plan will be approved by the president, and we can begin implementing. The assumption is that the timeline for that would be that this would be in place by the end of this calendar year so that we could launch it in 2025. If you’re on any of those other groups, that’s an opportunity where there’ll be more input. It could be a chance to talk to University Council representatives or president’s budget roundtable representatives to offer that kind of input through the shared leadership and the shared governance structures.

In addition to that, we’ve talked a lot in here about academic efficiencies. We continue to implement those, basically looking at our low-enrollment courses. Basically looking at with those low-enrollment courses, making sure that we’re not impeding student progress in their degree programs, but that we’re using our resources wisely.

In addition to that, rebalancing load; so, if someone’s not teaching a low-enrollment class and they can teach a class that has more students in it, making those kinds of moves, those kinds of transitions. And then reducing curricular complexity is one that we’ve talked about but that we’ve not made as much progress on. This is, again, looking at, do we have particularly low enrollment specializations; do we have courses that are offered that are duplicative of other courses; do we have prerequisites that are not necessary. And so, a lot of those conversations are taking place in curricular bodies, but we’re pretty early in that process of reducing that curricular complexity that has two benefits: 1) It makes our curriculum easier to implement and to manage, and 2) it also makes it more streamlined for students. That work continues to be ongoing, and so, if you are in any of those curricular bodies, you may have engaged in some of those conversations. But all of that goes through our shared governance curricular process. And so, that reduction of curricular complexity is something that we’re going to be talking about, probably not just for this academic year, but probably into next academic year, as well.

**G. Middlemist:** I’m going to flip the bullets a little bit, but we are continuing to look to shrink our campus footprint. I think most of you are all aware of us closing the Lorado Taft campus at the end of the December. We’re continuing to look at the spaces that we have and doesn’t make sense to continue to have those spaces. We’re in the process of relocating a few offices into Lowden. Lowden was the building that had the accounting office. It has RIPS. It has OERD, Purchasing. And a lot of the staff – at least in my staffs, accounting and purchasing – are working hybrid schedules or highly remote schedules. And so, we have some empty spaces. And so, we are looking to bring HR in. And some of OERD and RIPS staff that are in other places, just to activate that building. By doing the HR staff move, we’re moving them out of the building they’re in on Lincoln Highway, and that will present us with an opportunity to negotiate and work with USGS to lease that space to them, so that becomes a revenue opportunity. We’re continuing to look at all the spaces and see if they make sense given our current working environment.

And then, the revenue generating opportunities – I talked a little bit about we have the potential with USGS once we move HR out. And Naperville, OERD, the NIU at Naperville campus, we actually are in the final stage of executing a several million dollar lease opportunity, I think it’s a ten-year lease with an organization. And so, we’re continuing to look at those sorts of things. We always are looking at other revenue opportunities if they make sense.

I wanted to talk a minute about the financial aid strategic deployment, because this is one that I think will have a real impact on the university’s deficit, but not at the expense of students. We’ve been making some changes to how we deploy aid to students. I think last year I shared an example where we had been looking at merit-based scholarships. Merit-based scholarships were being offered to students at $3,000 for their freshman year, and that was their merit award. We repackaged that to make that award $4,000, but to aware it over four years, so $1,000 each year of their time here. So, they didn’t have, all of a sudden, their sophomore year, trying to figure out how they would pay for another $3,000 of their education. We were able to look at the data this year to see if that had an impact, and it did. We saw a net tuition growth of a little over $1 million from that change. We continue to look at other changes in our financial aid packaging where we can leverage maybe state dollars like AIM HIGH to help students with things like housing and where that might have an impact on net tuition revenue. When we’re modeling that out, that could potentially have an over $1 million impact, because those students tend to retain better. And that doesn’t consider the amount of money that the state’s now paying for the housing that we also get in terms of revenue. So, those are some of the actions that we’re taking.

If we want to go to the next slide, this is another action that we’re taking that I want to share with this group. We’re doing a renewable energy project. We’ve been planning for this since late last spring. We’ve been working with a company called Trane. We have a lot of aging infrastructure. Our HVACs, our steam, all the things that we rely on to heat and cool the buildings, except for Altgeld [laughter], we either keep it too hot or too cold. We’re looking at a project where we can renew a lot of spaces in terms of their energy consumption, or energy infrastructure, and at the same time, take advantage of tax credits from the federal level and the state level, and reduce our energy costs. This project will generate about 26 percent energy savings. It will generate about $8 million in tax rebate incentives, so tax credits. Normally, universities like NIU don’t get to take advantage of those, because we don’t pay taxes. But for the Inflation Reduction Act, they actually made that so that universities can actually get the money; they just get it directly.

If I were in the audience, I’d be wondering, how are we going to pay a $56 million project when we don’t have a lot of extra resources. So, we’re leveraging the savings. We haven’t finished the financing, but the goal has been to structure a financing where the savings from the energy support the debt payments that we would be taking on. We’re trying to make the debt as short as possible so we don’t have a long runway like we normally have had with that 40 years. I’m hoping to keep it 25 years or less, we’ll see. It depends on the interest rates and all of the things that are happening. If the projects ends up having to add to the deficit, we will probably go back to the table and try something different, but right now everything looks like we could generate positive cash every year of the project; the savings exceed the financial modeling that we’re doing right now. The proof is when we go to bonds and see how things really play out. In addition to the 26 percent energy savings, it will also reduce our carbon footprint by about 12 percent.

So, these are things that I think are really important. The financial aid example, this example, where you can invest a little bit of money to have, actually, a greater return on that investment. So, that helps with the budget mitigation.

I didn’t say this, but the thing that I really get excited about with projects like this is that, oftentimes in higher ed, when we talk about public-private partnerships, we’re talking about a deal with a private entity that will do housing on your campus. And so, they have an incentive to make money on your students, you require your students to stay there. There’s really no public-private partnership other than you’ve taken some of the risk of having a debt facility off of your books, but it’s not really a public-private partnership. This is, actually, a true public-private partnership. So, we have a private partner that’s going to actually going to make a little bit of money; they’re going to earn a profit, which I think is okay. But the university benefits, because we have a better impact on our environment, we are more sustainable; and then the partner actually engages our students. They do things like they have some projects where they have the students learning how to work on the systems. And they’ve, actually, hired several of our students. One of our students is working on the project with us now. It’s a really cool and true public-private partnership.

**L. Elish-Piper:** And I’ll also add just contextually, one of the top considerations that today’s college students have when they’re looking at a campus is how sustainable it is. This is definitely a consideration. And so, this strategy would support recruitment efforts in terms of being able to talk about the ways in which we’re being more sustainable, reducing our carbon footprint, and we’re turning our campus into a more green campus.

I mentioned university goals, and I want to do this cascading slide here to talk about that. The university goals will be approved in December, and they work on calendar year. So, it’s always challenging in higher education, some things are academic year, some things are fiscal year, some things are calendar year. The university goals run on a calendar year.

President Freeman will be bringing some draft components of the university goals to University Council next week to get some feedback, and one of the things that we’ll see is that all of the university goals have a fiscal component. Really trying to make sure that we, as a campus, are working collaboratively, that we are working across goals to make sure that we’re doing things in a ways that’s fiscally responsible, but also fiscally sustainable.

In addition to that, the role of shared governance and shared leadership. I mentioned what we’re doing right now with the memo to advise the president on strategic personnel decisions, but that model will play out in other areas as well. And so, when we think about shared governance, our Resource, Space and Budget Committee that Ben talked about that’s going to be reconstituted, will be an important partner in the work related to continuing to not only close the budget deficit, but overall in terms of how we work through and develop and implement our budget moving forward.

The president’s budget roundtable, that shared leadership group, will continue to be involved not just in the conversation tomorrow about the memo to advise the president, but all of these budget related decisions and opportunities.

And then I had already mentioned the memo to advise the president. There will be other memos to advise the president on some of these other strategies, but the first one focuses in on this strategic personnel decision. So, that’s the one that I was able to talk about in a little more specificity with you today.

As we look at what we’re going to be engaging in to address the budget deficit, it really requires the work of all of us on campus, and so being able to leverage shared leadership and shared governance groups will be vital to making this all happen.

That’s what we have prepared in terms of our slides, but we are happy to go to the next slide, which I think then asks if you have questions.

**W. Mills:** Hi, William Mills, Engineering Technology. Our program is actually called environmental health and safety and sustainability, and I have to tell you nobody’s contacted us. This is our students, we teach this stuff. So, I’m a little bit concerned that you’re not using resources that are on campus, like our senior design program and all that sort of stuff. We have probably, I can tell you right off, about 100, at least 100 years experience in this type of stuff within our department. And there are lots of students in senior design, graduate school, etc. So, I would really hope that – the other thing is it allows you to doublecheck the partner. I’ve been involved, lots of my career, where I’ve gone in as a consultant to look over other people’s work and find out that maybe you’re not always getting things. So, I would encourage there to be more communication involving the resources that are already on campus.

**G. Middlemist:** I appreciate that. I know that Trane has been working with the mechanical engineering students, but I’ll be sure and share this information with them.

**T. Arado:** Thank you for coming and sharing this with us today. I’m Therese Arado from the College of Law Library. Two things – the first is that I just wanted to make sure I heard it correctly – June 30, 2024, we had a $30 million deficit. The idea is by June 30, 2025, to have it at $15 million and, hopefully, June 30, 2026, eliminated?

**L. Elish-Piper:** Yes.

**T. Arado:** Okay. I had different dates in my head, so thank you for that clarification. The second one is just something that probably other people will say at times. When you’re looking at the first step of the MAP, I’ve heard a lot about strategic hiring and efficiencies and all of the words that are around. And I know I’m not alone in this room in that some of us cannot be anymore efficient. And the only way we can be more efficient is to have another human being, human resources actually added to what we’re doing. We’ve gone through years of losing full-time positions, losing extra help positions. Every time I see that, I think, yes, we’ve saved money on extra help because they’ve been taken away. But now other people have to do these, and it’s not a logical transfer of tasks. We had the extra help because we weren’t allowed five, six, seven, eight years ago, to hire full-time people. I understand what you’re doing. I absolutely understand this need. But especially for folks who have been around for a while, it hurts every time you hear that, because we feel like that’s constantly what we’re being subjected to. And if one more time I hear see about transferring duties – to whom? There is nobody to transfer the duties to. Just have to say it out loud in a public forum to keep that in mind, because I do know what you’re doing is very difficult. I’m not saying, oh you can’t do this, but please keep that in mind.

**L. Elish-Piper:** Absolutely, thank you, Therese. One of the things that we haven’t been good at is, are there things that we can stop doing? Are there processes or forms or steps that we currently require that are not necessary or are things that we could stop doing. And I know President Freeman has articulated that in a number of settings, but we, as a campus, have not really been great at that in the past. So, I think that is something we need to consider. Are there things that we can stop doing? And also, in terms of efficiencies, I do want to mention a couple of tools that I think will be helpful to us moving forward, moving to Curriculog, moving to timekeeping is going to be done in a very different way. In some offices, as much as 40 percent of some staff members’ responsibilities focused on timekeeping. Now there are new tools to do that. So, we do have some technology tools that I think are helpful in some regard. But I do think we are at a point where we need to ask, what can we stop doing to try and ensure that we’re investing our resources and the time of our people in the things that matter most.

**S. Sharp:** Hi, Shane Sharp, Sociology. What is the biggest cost that’s causing the deficit?

**G. Middlemist:** I don’t know that you can track it to a specific cost. When you look at costs at the university, I think the single biggest driver is inflation. For me, it’s a math equation. You look at a university where the state has not kept up with inflation. Our appropriation in 2015 was $92 million, just slightly less than $92 million. If you adjust that for inflation for today, it’s $123 million. So, there’s $30 million that the state hasn’t kept up with, just inflation. And when you think about that, inflation is not, the state, part of the inflation is the inflation that the university has suffered, because we don’t get all the funding from the state. We have other revenue sources, we have other expenses that aren’t paid for by state funding. So, I think the state – I don’t want to say disinvestment – but not keeping up with investing in higher education has been a big driver. I think that you’re in a state where there’s a lot of pressure – there was a lot of movement in tuition early on in the 2010’s. We had the great recession, a lot of universities raised their tuitions a lot, which created a blow-back and started holding tuition rates down. So, you have that. You have enrollment that has declined since 2011, and is starting to stabilize. So, that has had a negative impact on revenue. And then you couple with that the fact that we have had inflation. So, there have been a lot of measure that, I think, to Therese’s comment, that the university has been doing, I’m guessing, since 2008, to try and reduce expenses, in probably not always strategic ways. But the fact of the matter is that expenses have gone up while revenues have either stayed flat or gone down.

**S. Sharp:** Since we’re in deficit spending, I’m assuming we’re going into debt?

**G. Middlemist:** We’re not.

**S. Sharp:** We’re not?

**G. Middlemist:** Not yet? We have cash. We’re spending our cash, which is a concern.

**S. Sharp:** So, we’re not in debt?

**G. Middlemist:** Well, we have debt from some of our capital projects that happened in the 2000’s to about 2009, there was actually a significant amount of capital projects that increased our debt.

**S. Sharp:** How much of our budget goes to paying off our debt?

**G. Middlemist:** Debt payments? About $20 million.

**S. Sharp:** Thank you.

**G. Middlemist:** I really appreciate the opportunity to come and share. I’m almost always in my office, maybe not this afternoon, because I think I want to go home and sit in an air conditioned house. If you send me a note, I’m always happy to answer questions. I know that this is a lot. We’re trying to work so that we have even more transparency in the budget with our budget website, and we’ll continue to work to improve that too.

**L. Elish-Piper:** Thank you. And likewise, if you have suggestions or questions or ideas or things that you think we should be doing, always feel free to reach out. Happy to hear that information and you never know where the next great idea is going to come from, so please do share. Thank you.

**B. Creed:** Thank you both for sharing. And if folks are interested in hearing about the MAP in reality, you’re always welcome to come to UC next week on Wednesday at 3 p.m.

**IX. Unfinished Business**

A. Proposed amendment to [FS Bylaws, Article 4.4.3.2 and 4.5.3.3](https://www.niu.edu/university-council/faculty-senate/bylaws/index.shtml#article4), Duties of the Graduate Council and Duties of the Baccalaureate Council

Second reading and vote

**B. Creed:** That brings us to unfinished business, which is a proposed amendment to Faculty Senate Bylaws, Article 4.4.3.2 and 4.5.3.3, Duties of the Graduate Council and Duties of the Baccalaureate Council. Before we begin discussion, if we could have a motion to approve the proposed amendment. All right, we’ve got a first [Atkins] and then a second? Thank you, Dan. On page 7, which is the last page of the packet, you will find the proposal summary. Essentially, this grew out of the coordination work, a realization that both these bodies have been acting, and precedence and the intention was that the Graduate Council and Baccalaureate Council would have the duty and responsibility to set standards and policy related to withdrawal and reentry for their students, for those graduate student and undergraduate students. However, the bylaws did not have those listed. So, this is an attempt to update the language to be inclusive of those two areas. Any discussion or comments related to this proposed amendment?

**T. Atkins:** Hi. Taylor Atkins, History. This is characteristically pedantic of me. Is there a reason the term is reentry in the Graduate Council and readmission for Baccalaureate Council? I don’t know if those should be the same or not. I just wonder if there’s a difference.

**B. Creed:** Alicia, I don’t think we had a clear distinction or reason for that.

**A. Schatteman:** [inaudible]

**T. Atkins:** They are different processes.

**A. Schatteman:** [inaudible]

**T. Atkins:** Okay. Didn’t know if that would cause any confusion or anything. Okay.

**B. Creed:** Appreciate the flag of that. Seeing nobody else moving toward the microphone, we’ll call the motion to vote, and I’ll turn it over to Pat to lead us through that process. If you haven’t picked up your clicker, please do so while we go over the rules.

**P. Erickson:** If you see your name on this list, or if you’re here today for somebody whose name is on the list, then you are a voting member, and we invite you to get a clicker. Remember, there’s no need to turn the clickers on or off. They’re going to activate automatically when you vote. For today’s proposal to amend a bylaw, we need to have two-thirds of those voting to vote yes. When the poll does open, we’ll tell you that clicking 1 or A is yes, you approve of the motion and you approve of the bylaw proposal. If you vote 2 or B, it’s no, you don’t agree with the motion. And if you vote 3 or C, you’re abstaining, which means you’re telling us that you’re here but you’re not voting. If you vote 3 or C to abstain, your vote will not impact the total calculation. Now, let me open that poll, and you can go ahead and click 1, 2 or 3. You should get a checkmark or a smiley face. If you have trouble with your clicker, raise your hand, and we’ll come and help you. Sometimes the little button is kind of hard to get it to register. [pause while helping several faculty senators] If anybody else is having trouble with the channel, we operate on channel 45. [pause] So, I think we’re ready then to close the poll. And that passes.

Yes – 44

No – 0

Abstain – 2

**B. Creed:** Thank you. That takes care of our unfinished business.

**X. New Business**

**B. Creed:** We have no new business for today’s meeting.

**XI. 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. First up is the Faculty Advisory Council to the IBHE by Tiffany Puckett.

**T. Puckett:** Good afternoon. I do have a few things related to the last meeting. Our last Faculty Advisory Council meeting was hosted by Roosevelt University. It was a great meeting, which started out with the provost giving an update about the $5 million grant they received from the U.S. Department of Education; so, they will be starting two new doctoral programs so that they can possibly become an R-2 university. One will be in biomed sciences and another one in information technology.

The four-year public universities caucus has continued its discussion about the importance of librarian faculty in the wake of Western Illinois University laying off their faculty librarians. They’re currently working on a resolution that’s going to be going to IBHE related to the importance of librarians and support for librarians. And I know at the next meeting, there will be discussion about signing off on CARLI, which is the Consortium of Academic and Research Librarians in Illinois resolution and statement that they’ve made regarding research and librarian faculty and the importance of those faculty.

We continue to have conversation around Senate Bill 3965, which is the higher ed funding bill, making sure that there is a member of the FAC at the meetings that have been hosted across Illinois related to this bill. I did attend the one here at Northern Illinois University. There is advocacy around making sure that there is a faculty member who is represented on any of the committees that are going to be – specifically the funding formula review panel. Right now, as the bill stands, it says that two members that represent an organization that advocates on the behalf of faculty. But we’re concerned that it does not say specifically faculty, and that person does not have to be faculty. So, we’ll continue to advocate to be a part of the table for that funding formula panel.

Our next meeting will be hosted on November 15 at Rosalind Franklin University, and I’ll give a report after that meeting. Any questions? Thank you.

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

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

Felicia Bohanon, Natasha Johnson, Ben Creed

Brad Cripe, Larissa Garcia, Tom Skuzinski

**B. Creed:** Next up is the UAC to the Board of Trustees. It’ll be brief. A lot of it had to do with what was already presented related to the Trane partnership and the campus energy improvement plan. And then the big news that was shared at that meeting, and I’m sure folks on campus have heard about, is the $40 million donation from the family of James and Theo Baustert to name the health technology center to provide resources to help with the completion of the construction of that to support the ongoing, to create an endowment to support the ongoing maintenance of that building, as well as over $10 million focused on providing programming and other activities going on in that center. This is a great opportunity as that building is getting underway, and will bring it to completion in a way that it was not otherwise going to be possible for. So, it’s just a testament to NIU, a testament to this family and the opportunity that that HTC building will bring to campus. I think that’s it.

C. Baccalaureate Council – report

Alicia Schatteman, Vice Provost for Academic Affairs

**B. Creed:** Next up is a report from the Baccalaureate Council. I invite up Vice Provost for Academic Affairs Alicia Schatteman.

**A. Schatteman:** Thank you very much for having me. First, I want to let you know who the leadership is in our shared governance this year for 2024-25. John Evar Strid is the assistant chair of the BC. Stephanie Baker is chair of the General Education Committee. And Farah Ishaq is the chair of the CIUAE. I’ll note, because Bill Pitney is here, that all are from the College of Education, so thank you, College of Education reps for your leadership this year.

Some BC updates, I’ll go through each of these. Credit for prior learning policy; curriculum proposal and approval platform; and community-engaged courses.

First up, the credit for prior learning policy. Our goal is to codify existing programs that use some form of credit for prior learning, and to, hopefully, consider other ways that your individual programs could contribute to that so we’re more attractive to our returning students. We basically reviewed and then codified existing programs using the credit for prior learning and kind of laid that out a little bit easier. In our existing policy, we really only had credit by examination, which are more commonly around AP credit. But, we also do award credit for credential evaluation, such as military credit or professional licensure. And so, you’ll see that in the revised policy, as well as credit by prior learning portfolio assessment, which a number of programs have embarked on that in the last few years. So, it’s codifying that. You can review that policy in the Policy Library. I just requested these shortened links so, hopefully, they’re all working by now. If you want to go check out the policy, you’ll see it there. We’re in a review period until November 1 and after that, then you’ll see it advertised elsewhere, and we’ll probably build out a little bit of a website to talk about our credit for prior learning.

Curricular proposal and approval platform. Last fall, we purchased Curriculum, originally Curriculog, but the company went under a revised name, so now they just go by Curriculum. Modern Campus is the corporate partner. They also provide our catalog service, so the online catalog is built with the Curriculum system. We hired a new curriculum coordinator and catalog editor, so Ian Gawron, if you haven’t heard of him and have any questions about Curriculum, that’s your contact. We did development and feedback phase around that, so it took us a year to kind of build it. So, we finished that up in the spring, created some training materials, which are accessible now online and went to do training with a lot of associate deans, curriculum committees, chairs, etc. That training is still ongoing, so if your department would like any assistance with any kind of training or support, please reach out to Ian and he’ll be happy to do that. This fall then, or really this summer I should say, because CLAS really starts inputting their proposals over the summer, we started all proposals for 2025-26 catalog using this new Curriculum platform.

Community-engaged courses. Here the goal is to highlight community-engaged courses that are already taking place on campus. Highlight the faculty and instructors who put the time and effort into teaching these courses and allow searching by our students if you’re looking for those kinds of experiences. It’s a voluntary designation, so it’s up to you if your program or department wants to propose a course. The outline of what that would look like was approved by the Baccalaureate Council and the GC back in the spring. We’re now working on the process and application. We hope to have that done within the next couple of weeks so that folks could start applying for either section level. So, one time approval, much like our free and low-cost textbooks idea or a permanent designation that would sit on the course for at least three years and then we would reevaluate it if it meets the criteria. So, if you want to learn more, you can go to that shortened URL, [cecourses](https://www.niu.edu/academicaffairs/undergraduate-affairs/community-engaged-courses.shtml), and learn about all the criteria there.

Some GEC updates. We have a general education landing page where you’ll see a lot of what we’ve doing over the last several years. In particular, in the spring, we worked on the philosophy and principles of general education with a task force. We also removed the pathways program, so, in case you didn’t hear about that, we no longer have pathways, got rid of those. We also – this is about a year and a half ago, two years now, but I bring it up as a reminder, we do have a general education syllabus statement. It’s located on the CITL website, as well. It’s also on ours if you want to take a look. If you are teaching a general education course or you offer general education courses in your department, please try to include the general education syllabus statement. It lets students know where this general education course fits, if it’s in a knowledge domain, for example, or in our foundation studies, and what it really satisfies.

We did some of the task force work, and I’ll share a little bit about what we found in the task force. Who teaches our general education program? It really is a mix, about 40 percent are tenured/tenure-track faculty. Another almost 40 percent are instructors. About 16 percent grad students and a small number of, about six percent, are staff. So, it really is a mix and what we learned in that is that, if we’re going to do professional development, we have to try to reach all of those individuals.

So, this was our task force. Thank you if you served, or if you know folks who served. We were meeting over the spring to create those general education philosophy and guiding principles. We also did some surveys of faculty and staff in the spring. We got about 75 faculty responses, about 82 student responses.

As a result of all of that work that we did in the spring and looking at who’s teaching our general education program, we created a community of practice. We launched that this August in collaboration with the Center for Innovative Teaching and Learning. So, if you want to learn more, you can go check out the Edge website. We’ve been meeting monthly alternating between virtual and in person. Our next session is November 19. I’ve been sending out reminders to anyone who’s teaching a general education course. So, if you’ve been getting my emails, sorry. There are about 250 folks who are teaching a general education section this fall, so I’ve been sending out reminders.

CIUAE updates. They’re working right now on determining what will be their focus area for this year. So, they’re doing a survey among their membership. But a couple of things that happen every year are some of their teaching awards. And so, you’ll see some deadlines up here in December. Nominations are due to the department by December 13 for undergraduate teaching award, which is for tenured and tenure-track faculty; and our instruction award, which is for our instructors. They a lot one of those each year, and those filter through the department to the college and, ultimately, CIUAE selects the recipients.

Just so you kind of know the portfolio, if there’s anything I can do to help, especially in any of these areas. We’ve kind of been putting them into these three buckets around academic persistence, enhancement, as well as quality. I list all of them here, and they’re on the Academic Affairs website.

But I want to call out a couple of things that are going on in some of these areas, which may be of interest to Faculty Senate. In particular, some student success initiatives. Our goal is to improve overall retention, that’s a university goal. But in particular, to reduce equity gaps, both in persistence, as well as graduate. One of the struggle we have in that is that sometimes by the time a student is having a problem, it’s too late. They’re too far down the road and it causes them to either drop out or step back. So, we want to create better systems to be more proactive in reaching students as early as possible to support their needs to capture the information that they need when they need it. We are using a holistic approach working with Student Affairs and our Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Team.

We shared this model in many of our college meetings this fall. So, if you’ve been to any of those, you would have seen this model. It looks at student success holistically among these six attributes.

We also have these tools for student success that we’re coordinating, and the two I’ll highlight today, one because it’s new, but Navigate is not new, but we also need your help. We are using a holistic and coordinated care model with that, meaning that we have folks on campus who are getting this information and trying to reach those students.

One is new, EdSights. I put the shortened URL up there – missionAI or [missionchatbotAI](https://www.niu.edu/academicaffairs/undergraduate-affairs/academic-support/mission-ai-chatbot.shtml) – you can use either one, and it should get you there. The goal is to provide information about resources on a 24/7 capacity in a student-friendly format, non-judgmental, in language that they will respond to. Again, to increase use of our student supports. We have a great deal of student resources, but we would like to see more students using them, and the students that really need them to use them sooner rather than waiting. Again, we also want to focus on closing the equity gaps.

If you go to the link, you can also find information about that particular company. The biggest piece for us is that it’s a change in proactively reaching out versus waiting for them to call and raise their hand and say I need help. So, this proactive approach basically sends out over text message, and the first text message will go November 6, after the election, one day later, in line with our re-enrollment campaigns. The goal is to have a welcome text so, if they have a cell phone in the system, they will get a welcome text. They can opt out at any time. They can leave the system. But that’s the original cell number that we will use where they will get that welcome text. The goal is that they will receive regular check-in text messages around those four key areas of student success, academic engagement, financial distress, wellness and engagement. And depending on the response that we get back, those would go through the system and the holistic team will get that response and do some outreach to the students. So, that’s the proactive engagement that is new for us.

What has existed is more of a response. The chatbot that’s also associated with EdSights, it does respond to student questions. So, hey, I’m having struggles with this, or I need to know how to do this? That would also be available on a 24/7 basis, similar to what we have now. This is not what it would look like, I just grabbed a picture of Mission. It will be Mission, but maybe not this picture. This is just one I grabbed. So, for example, when we think about Mission, this is SMS, so the text messaging service chatbot, will check in with your students about NIU, provide resources, kind of a Siri built for us. We’re creating the knowledge domain where the information is going to come from, and we’re working with units across campus to make sure that information is accurate.

So, how can Mission help students? One is that reactive, responding 24/7. I have a question, raise your hand. When do I register? How do I contact my advisor? The other one is that initiation of conversations in a very neutral way where we can actually gather some information from them and respond to them. It is not anonymous. It is tied to their Z-ID so we know exactly who is responding, when, what their questions are, how we responded back to them. We’re also working with our crisis team so we understand if a student says – and we will now outline all of the scripts, what that’s going to look like, looking for key words. If there is a crisis situation, we have a rapid response for that, so similar to what we do in other crisis situations, if we get an email or etc.

The proactive outreach is basically the new part to this whole system. So, here’s just an example of what a text message might be. So, hey, and we’re going to use your name that’s in the system, and we’re also going to ask if this is your preferred name. If it’s not, here’s how you go to change your preferred name. But, hey Sam, I’m here to support you. By the way, I’m just a robot, but I can get you to the humans if you need a human. Save me in your contacts as Mission, and you can also leave at any time. So, this is a sample.

So, EdSights, if you want to know more information, Brandon Lagana, who also oversees our Navigate team, is also our contact for EdSights. All things technology, contact Brandon. We do have a new email, [edsights@niu.edu](mailto:edsights@niu.edu). And I embedded the video so you can go take a look. It’s about two minutes; it will kind of walk you through what that will look like.

On to Navigate, which most of you are probably familiar with. Again, the idea is that, as we receive alerts, we use this response team to respond, both from faculty as well as staff. And then we do that outreach to students. So, once an alert has been received, a holistic team responds to that depending on what the alert is for. Typically, it’s attendance or not turning in assignments, top two, I guess that’s not a surprise. And it really helps to document. So, even if you think I’m not sure what this does, I will tell you it does a lot. One, it lets you know, if there are multiple alerts for a student, it gives us a holistic picture. It’s also a history and a log of behavior and/or alerts. I’m co-teaching an Honors seminar right now, and I have one student who hasn’t been to class. This is Week 10, and I know you might have some of those. So, when I submitted an alert, I got a response immediately saying, thank you for your alert, we’re going to look into it. In this case, the student lives on campus, because all that information is stored in Navigate. So, we reached out to our Student Affairs folks, and they sent the CA to check in on the student. By the way, the student is fine but just had decided they’re not going to go to class. So, we know this, and this also a student where we know this is happening in multiple classes. We have done all the outreach that we can. The case is closed. It doesn’t mean the student starts going to class. It means that we have logged that, we have done all the outreach that we can to students. But it’s vitally important that you’re going in and providing those alerts. Across campus, we only have about a 40 percent of faculty participation in alerts. So, I’m asking if there is any way that you can use that. If we can increase that, it would really help us out, because it gives us a more holistic picture of what’s going on with that student.

We also need faculty assistance. We have what are called progress reports. You might be most familiar with progress reports coming from Athletics. If you have athletes in your class, you’ll get an alert, hey, tell us how Sandy is doing or whatever. But we also will reach out to other

students about other students and, again, your support is really needed. We only had about 35 percent of faculty responding to those progress report requests in the spring, so we’re hoping to increase that as well.

So, why use Navigate? It helps us to identify and prioritize students, initiate those conversations, how they might be experiencing academic or personal challenges, simplifies student intervention. EAB, the company that owns Navigate, they were just here for an all-day yesterday. We’re hoping to able to see a richer picture of who our students are, what they need and when they need it, so we can concentrate on those students. It does issue referrals and early alerts. Also, study buddies, if you’re not familiar with that, that is a function of Navigate. Basically, it allows students to get together and study in a group through Navigate. So, it’s kind of like an app within the app where you can identify, I need help, I want to work with some other folks, are there others who want to work with me. Again, if you have any questions around Navigate, use the navigate@niu.edu. It’s monitored both by Brandon, as well as Carla.

And then just some overall announcements. The NIU Newman Civic Fellow for 2025-26, we sent that out to the chairs last Wednesday or so. A student has to be nominated by December 6. Then we alert the student that you’ve been nominated to be a Newman Civic Fellow. The student has until the end of January to complete that application, and then we review that as a committee. NIU can only submit one. It’s a result of us being a member of Campus Compact. And so, the student that gets selected gets to participate in various professional development opportunities. It’s particularly interesting for students who have a public service mindset that they want to do community work, etc. That came to your chairs if you want to check it out. The shortened URL, you an go there – [newmancivicfellow](https://www.niu.edu/engaged-learning/civic-engagement/newman-civic-fellowship/index.shtml) – and hear about what those Newman Civic Fellows do and what the support is.

The other thing is, I would be here if I also did a textbook reminder. Textbook adoptions are due this week for spring to guarantee availability of resources by the start of the new semester. Any time after this week, there is no guarantee that they’ll be here come the end of January. They are due this week. Hopefully, we’ll see summer and fall adoptions will be due around early April. We have been without a bookstore manager for a couple of months now. We’re close to getting a new one. We will keep you up to date on that. But if you’re not familiar, please reach out to Celeste Brown at [2089txt@follett.com](mailto:2089txt@follett.com). If you don’t want to go through the Follett, the easiest way is actually to do it through Blackboard. You could do that. If you’re a chair and you’re hiring instructors and you don’t know yet, but you know what the book will be, department chairs can go in and do concierge, and you can adopt books on behalf of faculty or instructors if you know what books they want to use, for example. But again, I remind you to try to get those book adoptions in as soon as possible. Where it really affects folks are students who are using our book charge program. Students are allowed to charge up to $700 to their financial aid account before the semester begins. And if we don’t have textbook adoptions, they can’t use it. That closes at the ten-day count, and then they have to pay out of pocket. So, if you’re late in adopting, they’re late in getting books, they have to use cash instead of their financial aid, it kind of backs everything up. So, if you’re able to, we would really appreciate adoptions.

And I’ll take any questions.

**B. Creed:** Is there any connection between the AI tool, Mission AI, and Navigate?

**A. Schatteman:** Yes, Edsights basically will sit on top of Navigate. The two will be integrated at the student level. So, as we’re getting information back from students, that will get fed through Navigate so that advisors and others will be able to see it through Navigate. Yes. Good question. That’s why Brandon is in charge of both, to do the integration.

Other thoughts or questions? Yes.

**B. Palese:** Biagio Palese, OMIS. A clarification – the website link that you posted for Mission AI doesn’t lead to anything.

**A. Schatteman:** Go to [missionaichatbot](https://www.niu.edu/academicaffairs/undergraduate-affairs/academic-support/mission-ai-chatbot.shtml). I don’t think my MissionAI made it all the way through the web approvals. So, missionaichatbot, or I can send it to you directly, but that’s the URL. They didn’t like my missionAI, I guess, when I requested it. And we just put it up yesterday, so it’s still in a little bit of development. But we wanted to have at least a landing page for when that first text message goes out on November 6. Did you get there? Cool. Awesome.

**R. Thomas:** Rosanne Thomas, Physical Therapy. This is just my ignorance, but are all of those resources that you talked about available to graduate students, as well as undergrad?

**A. Schatteman:** The AI chatbot, in particular, the EdSights, is only for our undergraduate students. That’s where we’re really focused on the student retention piece. Navigate is open to graduate students and graduate advisors can use it. We have much higher adoptions on the undergraduate side, but Navigate is a functionality we can use with our graduate students.

Any other thoughts or questions?

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

**A. Schatteman:** Thank you.

D. Faculty Rights and Responsibilities Committee – no report

Therese Arado, Chair

**B. Creed:** Next up is Faculty Rights and Responsibilities Committee. We have no report.

E. Social Justice Committee – no report

**B. Creed:** Social Justice Committee report, there will be no report from that committee for today.

F. FS-UC Rules, Governance and Elections Committee – no report

Emily McKee, FS/RGE Liaison/Spokesperson

**B. Creed:** Then no report from Rules, Governance and Elections.

G. Student Government Association – no report

Ja’kobe Jones, SGA President

Manny Corpuz, Speaker of the Senate

**B. Creed:** Do we have an SGA report? I did not see Manny. Okay, it looks like no report for today.

H. Operating Staff Council – no report

Natasha Johnson, President

**B. Creed:** Operating Staff Council report? No report.

I. Supportive Professional Staff Council – no report

Felicia Bohanon, President

**B. Creed:** And no report from Supportive Professional Staff Council.

**XII. 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: Oct 30, Nov 20, Jan 22, Feb 19, Mar 26, Apr 23

**B. Creed:** That brings us to informational items. You’ll see A through O are the standard ones. P is our meeting dates. Our next meeting is November 20, and that will be the last one for this calendar year.

**XIII. Adjournment**

**B. Creed:** Which brings us to adjournment. Can I have a motion for adjournment. David first, Therese second. All in favor of adjourning today’s meeting, please say aye.

**Members:** Aye.

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

Meeting adjourned at 4:05 p.m.