TRANBSCRIPT – FACULTY SENATE

**Wednesday, November 20, 2024, 3 p.m.**

**Altgeld Hall Auditorium**

**Northern Illinois University**

**DeKalb, Illinois**

**VOTING MEMBERS PRESENT:** Akst, Alex, Arado, Atkins, Barrett, Bender, Bohanon, Books, Brain, Burton, Cain, Campbell, Corpuz, Creed, Demir, Duffin, Ehsani, Finch, Fotovat, Ito, Lampi, Libman, Luo, McGowan, McKee, Mills, Naples, Novak, Nyunt, Oluwatobi, Palese, Rajabi, Ross, Sabio, Salehinia (for Vahabzadeh), Salimi, Sharp, Sirotkin, Slagstad, Slotsve, Staikidis, Stalcup, Swedlow, Thomas, Thurmaier, Van Wienen, VanTilburg, Whedbee, Woods, Yang

**VOTING MEMBERS ABSENT:** Cefaratti, Chan, Chomentowski, Dada, Hartenhoff, Isawi, Nesterov, Sibley, Vahabzadeh, Wang

**OTHERS PRESENT:** Acardo,Elish-Piper, Falkoff, Gonzalez, Puckett, Schatteman

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

**I. Call to Order**

**B. Creed:** I am going to call to order today’s meeting of the Faculty Senate, Wednesday, Nov. 20, 2024.

**II. Verification of Quorum**

**B. Creed:** Liz, who is stepping in today, do we have a quorum?

**L. Wright:** Yes, we do.

**III. Adoption of the Agenda**

**B. Creed:** That brings us to adoption of the agenda for today’s meeting. Can I have a motion to adopt today’s agenda? Arado, and Scott Stalcup the 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 adopted.

**IV. Approval of the October 30, 2024, minutes**

**B. Creed:** Up next is the approval of the October 30, 2024, minutes. Those are on pages 3 through 5 of your packet. Can I have a motion to approve the minutes? Thank you, Felicia. And a second? Virginia, thank you. Is there any discussion on the minutes? Seeing none, nobody moving toward the mics, all in favor of approving the October 30, 2024, minutes, please say aye.

**Members:** Aye.

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

**V. Public Comment**

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

**L. Wright:** We have not received any requests for public comment.

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

**B. Creed:** Moving right along, that brings us to Faculty Senate president’s announcements. I’m going to be brief with my announcements today as we have a fairly full agenda. I’ve only got two. The first is I want to remind folks that represent groups that have an open Faculty Senate seat for Fall 2025, to help work within your unit or your constituency group, to help recruit somebody into this position. It’s really a key university level service opportunity, and I really hope we continue to build a deep bench of folks who are committed to shared governance and contributing to the work of the Faculty Senate. We’re encouraging elections to take place in the upcoming weeks, and we’ve reached out to department chairs and schools that have an opening. But we do hope that you all go back and remind folks we’re hoping to have no later than early January or no later than January so we can have that full slate by February. That will help us put together committees and make plans for the upcoming academic year. I know it’s a long ways away, but it’s also right around the corner.

The second item I have is related to what I started last session about sharing some of the behind-the-scenes or the non-known work that’s going on through this body. I wanted to share today about the development, kind of a longer-term project, to develop a single place to find university procedures related to Faculty Senate Bylaws. The intention is to allow committees to work more efficiently, improve continuity over the years and allow for procedures to be reviewed and improved as necessary. I’m grateful to the Faculty Senate-University Council Rules, Governance and Elections Committee for taking on the foundational work for this where they will be looking through our bylaws to see where procedures ought to exist, or they likely exist. And then once that work has been completed, I’ll be working with the various bodies of the Faculty Senate to collect the various procedures documents that are in place or to coordinate the development of procedures that are implied. If you have those on hand and you want to get ahead of the game, feel free to reach out to me and send them along. Otherwise, I’ll be reaching out later on with specific asks. And again, the hope is to produce a systematic way to elevate and make available our procedures on campus related to the Faculty Senate. That concludes my announcements.

**VII. Provost’s Announcements**

**B. Creed:** That brings us to the provost’s announcements, and I’ll invite Provost Elish-Piper up.

**L. Elish-Piper:** Good afternoon, everyone. I want to remind everyone it’s that time of the semester that we need to do book adoptions for spring. Book adoptions were due the last week of October, but we still have a lot of them that have not yet been submitted. If you can please take that message back to your colleagues and encourage them to do so as quickly as possible. You can do that within the Follett Discover Textbook Adoption area in Blackboard, is the most efficient way to do that. We want to make sure that students have access to those texts when classes begin.

I also want to give you an update. Alicia Schatteman had shared the [EdSites](https://www.edsights.io/), AI texting program that we had launched, or are going to launch. And I want to let you know that we did launch it and that we had 10,172 students who received those text messages and only a very small fraction of students have opted out. The idea behind this is to connect with students and help them if they need resources or information, if they’re struggling with things, if they have questions that they don’t know what the answers are. It sits on top of Navigate. We’ve been very pleased since we launched it on November 6, that we’ve had just about one percent of students who have opted out, and most of them were seniors. And so it seems like most students are opted in. The most recent question that we asked students was about their plans to return in the spring. And we were able to identify 222 students who said that they had barriers to being able to return in the spring. And so we’ve been able to have the appropriate people on campus reach out to those students to try and provide support or information or assistance with addressing those barriers to students being able to re-enroll. And so, we’re very excited that the launch of the EdSites seems to be going well in terms of providing another mechanism for supporting our students and their success.

Faculty nominations for students for the 2025-26 [Newman Civic Fellowship Program](https://www.niu.edu/engaged-learning/civic-engagement/newman-civic-fellowship/index.shtml) offered by the [Campus Compact](https://compact.org/current-programs/student-programming/newman-civic-fellowship) are now available. If you go to the [OSEEL website](https://www.niu.edu/engaged-learning/index.shtml). If you can think of students who might benefit from this year-long program focused on civic and community engagement, those nominations will be accepted until December 6. And then students have until January to complete the application if they are nominated. If you’re interested, you can go to the OSEEL website.

I want to remind everyone that it’s International Education Week. Some of you may have attended some of those events. There are a lot of others on the campus calendar. If you haven’t had a chance to look at those, you may want to see if there are events that you’re interested in attending for the remainder of the week.

As this semester approaches the end, we know that [commencement](https://www.niu.edu/commencement/) is around the corner, so I have some commencement reminders for you. If you have not RSVP’ed for an undergraduate ceremony, those RSVPs are supposed to be submitted by today, but usually there’s a little bit of flexibility if people are a little bit late on that and want to attend. Sunday, Dec. 15, at 10 a.m., we’ll have our first undergraduate ceremony. That’s for the College of Engineering and Engineering Technology, College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, and College of Visual and Performing Arts. The second undergraduate ceremony is also Sunday, Dec. 15. It begins at 2 o’clock, and that’s for the College of Business, College of Education, and College of Health and Human Sciences. If you are interested in attending the graduate ceremony, you can RSVP up until December 1. And that ceremony is on Saturday, Dec. 14, at 2 o’clock. And so, I look forward to seeing a lot of you and your colleagues at commencement. I know that when students have an opportunity to see the faculty who have made a significant impact on their degree completion, they really enjoy that opportunity. So, I look forward to seeing folks there.

That concludes my announcements.

**B. Creed:** Thank you.

**VIII. Items for Faculty Senate Consideration**

A. Annuitants Association

Toni Tollerud, President

Terry Borg, Vice President

**B. Creed:** So, moving right along, that brings us up to items for Faculty Senate consideration. We have two different items today. The first up is the Annuitants Association presentation by Toni Tollerud and Terry Borg. So, I will turn it over to them for their presentation.

**T. Tollerud:** Thank you very much. You can call me Hop-Along today. My name is Dr. Toni Tollerud. I’m a retired faculty. And if you ask me when I retired, I’d have to say I’m not sure, because I retired three times. Somebody got it. But anyway, I’m very glad to be here today and currently I am the president of the [Northern Illinois University Annuitants Association](https://www.niu.edu/annuitants/). And I’m going to let Terry introduce himself in a minute. I’m a proud person who spent most of my time here in the Department of Counseling, Adult and Higher Education, which may have a new name now, I’m not sure. And then I spent a couple years in the dean’s office, and it was delightful, a great place to be. I came to NIU in 1990, was going to stay a year, and voilá, I’m still here. I hope that NIU is as good to you as it has been to me through my journey as an educator and professor. Terry, you want to introduce yourself?

**T. Borg:** My name is Terry Borg, and I am the vice president of the NIU Annuitants Association. I retired, I think, about two or three years ago. It’s funny how time passes much faster when you’re retired. And the fact is that, as I look around the room, I see many old friends here that will probably one day retire, as well.

**T. Tollerud:** So, just to get us started, how many of you currently are Annuitants [Association] members, would you raise your hand? Oh, that’s not good, that’s not good. Okay, thank you. How many of you are Tier I retirees? And then those of you that are Tier II? Okay. Well, the best way to start out talking about the Annuitants is that the Annuitants Association is for everyone. And we’re hoping today to leave you with enough information that you might consider joining the Annuitants here. It’s a very worthy organization. While it’s kind of in the background, it’s always active on our behalf as retirees and current faculty and staff from this institution. They’re always working for us trying to get us the best they can in our retirement packages, as well as insurance. We have a very large lobby that lobbies for legislation that helps universities and our pension plans and anything else that has to do with us. It’s a worthy organization to belong to. So, that’s just my beginning words, but Terry’s going to talk a little bit about what NIUAA is and what it’s about.

**T. Borg:** Great, so you should be thinking about this purely from a self-interest point of view. It’s really about you and your colleagues that you need to think about this, because someday, whether it’s from here or someplace else, you’re going to retire, whether you want to or not. I want to share with you a little bit about the NIU Annuitants Association in terms of how it can serve you and how it is serving you right now.

To get started and kind of level the playing field, I want to give you some definitions so as I go ahead and talk today, you may not be confused. First of all, the NIU Annuitants Association is one of 53 chapters in the state of Illinois of something called the [State Universities Annuitants Association](https://www.suaa.org/), or more affectionately known as SUAA. If you’re a member of the NIU Annuitants Association, you become a member automatically of SUAA. And SUAA membership, as Toni indicated, is for both current employees, along with retirees. So, when I worked at NIU, I was a NIU Annuitants Association member for probably around 15 of my 21 years here. It’s important to also note that the NIU Annuitants Association, our chapter alone, is the largest chapter of all the chapters in the state of Illinois, which means that it’s bigger than UIC’s and it’s bigger than University of Illinois Champaign/Urbana, as well.

Let’s talk about SUAA for a minute, since that’s really the mother organization, and that’s really where you get most of your services from. SUAA’s sole purpose is to promote and protect the interests of the participants in the State Universities Retirement System. Immediately you may be thinking, oh, okay, SURS, that’s the traditional plan. I’m not part of the traditional plan. I’m not going to be interested in this. But as I speak a little bit later, you’re going to find out how you will be interested in this because, again, it does serve your interests, even if you’re in what’s known as the self-managed or portable plan or also the defined contribution plan.

While SURS administers the pension part of your program, SUAA advocates for us. We’ve already referred to our Tier I and Tier II employees. Many of you know what that means. But Tier I employees are those people who were employed before January 1, 2011. Tier II employees are those that got employed within the university system or state of Illinois employee system after January 1, 2011. And that’s important, because Tier II employees currently get less retirement benefits than Tier I, and we’ll talk about that in a moment, as well.

Usually, I have to wait until the end of the schpiel to find out what’s this is going to cost me. I directed this as being purely for your self-interest. I’m going to tell you the cost right up front so, as I’m talking about this, you can assess whether or not it’s worth your time to even listen further. To join the organization, it’s $1.75 per pay period or $42 a year. We’re talking less than the cost of a cup of coffee a month.

With all of this as background, these definitions in mind, let me tell you what SUAA has already done for us. We ride on the shoulders of others. SUAA and others successfully sued the state of Illinois in 2014 over legislation to transfer the cost of health care insurance to retirees and to diminish retirement benefits. The Illinois Supreme Court found both of these legislative acts to be unconstitutional. Without SUAA, this probably wouldn’t have happened. SUAA also led a successful campaign to defeat an Illinois constitutional amendment deemed detrimental to its members in about that same period. And recently, in the last year, SUAA filed an amicus brief in support of the plaintiff’s right under the state’s reciprocal act whereby transferring from SURS to a judge’s retirement system, the plaintiff, we argued, should receive Tier I status instead of Tier II. And in English that all means that this person actually started employment in the state university system before 2011 and was Tier I, and became a judge after 2011 and was deemed to be Tier II. He went to retire and he found out that he was going to get far less benefits, and that’s why he’s suing and that’s why SUAA is supportive of him.

Currently, SUAA does a lot for us, whether you’re a member or not – and that’s why we really would prefer you to be members. They do the following: You get regular legislative updates being considered both in Springfield and Washington, D.C. And for those of you who have worked in other places beyond NIU prior to this time and paid social security, you’d be interested in these updates because HR 82 recently passed in a bipartisan effort in the U.S. House of Representatives. And what the bill did, basically, was going to repeal the Windfall Elimination Provision and the Government Pension Offsets. And what those bills do in their current position is that they reduce your social security benefits. Again, this bill passed the house; they’re going to try to get it through the Senate, and we’ll see what happens before Biden retires. The bottom line here is that you’ll get those updates to find out what’s going on.

SUAA’s always on alert to defend the Illinois Constitution’s Pension Protection Clause. It testifies both legislative committees on our behalf. It also networks with legislators to increase SUAA’s visibility and influence. We engage lobbyists on our behalf to advocate for our rights as retirees, as well as it advocates – and this is where the Tier II folks should be interested – it’s advocating for the enhancement of Tier II benefits for employees, specifically and most importantly, benefits that at least meet social security safe harbor requirements. So, this is what the organization’s currently doing. Keep that in mind, and we’ll continue to work on your behalf.

You should also know there are two other components to SUAA. One is the SUAA Foundation. The SUAA Foundation is basically a not-for-profit charity that provides emergency and survivor assistance to its members. It offers scholarships to its members, to the children of its members and to the grandchildren of its members, as well as to current employees, it provides you professional development dollar opportunities. I must say that those professional development dollar opportunities, people don’t apply for those, and so it’s pretty easy pickings if you’re looking for some money for some research project that you’ve got going. So, I’d encourage you – again, another great reason to join.

Another arm of SUAA is the SUAA Action. This is a separate arm from the SUAA group. Basically, through voluntary member contributions, it makes donations to different political campaigns, as well as provides you grassroots opportunities for campaigning.

Our local NIU chapter of the Annuitants Association provides coffee hour meet-ups. We do an annual meeting in June. There are travel opportunities that we promote. We also have an endowed scholarship at NIU, and we also have representatives that sit on many university committees; for example, the University Benefits Committee, as well as the parking committees.

I think membership is a must for all current employees and retirees. It’s regardless if you’re Tier I, Tier II, participate in SURS traditional plan or if you’re in the self-managed, portable or defined contribution plans, whether or not you plan to retire from NIU or someplace else. Life is strange, and sometimes it will all of a sudden take you to another university or to another arm within the state employee system. Without knowing it today, when it comes time for retirement, this organization would have been fighting for you all the way along. In those areas where you’re not getting the defined pension, remember the medical benefits that are provided through our current retirement and those again are valuable assets to maintain. We’re highly regarded by state legislators as being an honest and fair voice on matters of retirement. As I mentioned, the dues are a great value - $1.75 a pay period, $42 a year. And fundamentally, there is strength in numbers. And that’s why we need you to consider joining our organization. It’s important that you pass the word on to others that you also represent.

Thanks for your attention. I’m going to tell you how you can join.

**T. Tollerud:** Can we get those pamphlets passed out Terry?

**T. Borg:** Sure.

**T. Tollerud:** If you don’t know, Chris Doe, who works in the Vice President’s Office, is our liaison to the Annuitants Board here, our chapter. One way you can join is simply by emailing Chris at [cdoe@niu.edu](mailto:cdoe@niu.edu), and she would very delightfully take your membership on the phone and tell you how you can submit your dues and make you a member of this organization.

If you’re from the old school and you like paper copy, I’ve got some. You can just raise your hand or come up and get some. We didn’t make a whole lot of those, because we figured most of you would want to do it electronically. But I do have some of those. You can also go to [suaa.org](https://www.suaa.org/) and on that website, I believe there is a QR code that you can take a picture of and go on there and then also join using that QR code. It’s also available that you can join in a way that has your annual dues updated every year without having to send you a reminder. Or, if you’re like me, you forget the reminder just came in, and then you fall out of the group. So, that’s another alternative that’s just recently been added, really makes it convenient for you to continue on to support this organization and to keep your membership current.

We send out two newsletters a year, one in the spring and one in the fall. As Terry mentioned, one of our wonderful perks: If you know Steven Johnson, who is a retired faculty from NIU, Steven hosts and leads travel all over the world. They just got back from India in the fall. And he takes loads of people on these trips, and we are one of the sponsors of those trips with Steven. So, I don’t know if you see that from other places, but if you join the Annuitants, you’ll see that’s on your schedule. Almost every month, you get something about upcoming trips. I think in December, he’s going to take a two- or three-week cruise around Hawaii. He calls it his winter get-away. So, he takes you to warm places and other options like that. And, as Terry said, one of the perks, and it doesn’t sound like much maybe, but think about it. Fifty-three chapters in the state, several of them much bigger than NIU, and we have the most members. That speaks a lot to what’s going on here to our commitment to, not only our retirement, but to our insurance and to making this organization work for us.

I think that’s it. There’s a handout that you’re welcome to take. These are the end, there’s a new one coming out from SUAA that I hope to have by the springtime. But you can certainly take that back and share it with some colleagues or share it at a department meeting and pass the word along. We’d love to have 100 percent of you next time I asked who’s a member of NIUAA again. Terry, anything you want to add?

**T. Borg:** No, I thank you for your interest and, hopefully, you’ll sign up, and we’ll see your name on the roster.

**T. Tollerud:** Are there any questions?

**E. McKee:** Hi, Emily McKee from Anthropology. What, if any, cooperation is there between SUAA and the faculty and staff?

**T. Tollerud:** Say that again?

**E. McKee:** What, if any, cooperation is there in terms of advocating for retirement benefits and things like that among SUAA and the faculty and instructor

**T. Tollerud:** It represents all the organizations. You don’t have to be faculty to join. We have staff.

**E. McKee:** I’m sorry, that’s a different question. I’m wondering if you work with the

**T. Borg:** The unions?

**E. McKee:** NIU unions or a faculty union in any of this legislative

**T. Tollerud:** I see. I don’t think so.

**T. Borg:** At this point, the SUAA executive director does reach out to the union leaderships, and they jointly present when appropriate. So, there is that cooperation between SUAA, as well as the various unions or represented groups within the state. It depends on the issue, but they do work together, they’re not at odds.

**T. Tollerud:** I would certainly say that any member of a union could certainly reach out to SUAA and ask to speak with somebody appropriately if they think there is something SUAA could do to help, appropriately, to support a cause or legislation in that area.

**T. Borg:** I can give one specific, quick example, and that’s the AFLCIO, because they’re the largest union in the state. When there are issues of joint interest, in particular those that impact state and university employees, our executive director, Brian Soady would go to them and try to present a joint effort in terms of their lobbying efforts.

**T. Tollerud:** Our executive director for SUAA just came on board January of 2024, so you can imagine, he’s making some massive changes, taking his time in it, but also making some things work differently and really building his connections to legislators as well as to organizations in the state.

**B. Creed:** Thank you.

B. Human Resource Services Presentation

John Acardo

Senior Associate Vice President and Chief Human Resources Officer

**B. Creed:** That brings us to Human Resource Services presentation from our senior associate vice president and chief human resources officer, John Acardo. If you’d like to come up, we can turn the floor over to you.

**J. Acardo:** Good afternoon. I do see that it looks like it might be snowing outside too, so, yeah, winter has come. Good afternoon, colleagues. Again, my name is John Acardo, I’m the chief human resources officer here at NIU. I appreciate the opportunity to come and present on some stats that I know many of you had requested that you see and hear from HR and kind of what we’re monitoring as it relates to one of the many different facets and elements of the university’s deficit mitigation strategy.

At the end of the presentation, I think we wanted to invite feedback and comments and kind of enter into some kind of collaborative conversation about ideas or thoughts or things that we can also explore for helping our deficit mitigation strategies, as well.

Before I get into this, I wanted to just add some context since I know this is the first time I’ve presented in this group this particular information, just so you all have kind of the same foundational expectations when we go through the slides. This is a small piece of the overall picture for all budget deficit mitigation strategies. And so, what I’m presenting here today are on four specific areas that, at the senior leadership level and at the divisional levels, we’ve had many ongoing conversations, especially from the monthly leadership meetings, getting feedback and solicitation from campus stakeholders in many different contexts about how we might be able to find ways to continue to find more strategic, to find a more strategic path forward for administrative efficiencies with the work that we do, but also potentially realizing cost savings along the way in that regard. We also identified, through some of these contexts, that there might be some opportunity to reach some targeted goals that might overall help with our budget deficit mitigation strategies. So, while this is one element, I might call on Laurie to come up and share a little bit more about some of the other areas that are currently being explored and discussed and feedback solicited on for other areas that we’re exploring for this deficit mitigation strategy.

**L. Elish-Piper:** I thought you might do that, so I made a little list. We’ve had a number of presentations at Faculty Senate since the beginning of the year and even last year talking about some of the different budget deficit mitigation strategies. And so, I just want to remind us of some of those. Obviously, always looking at student recruitment, student retention. Right now, we’re in the process of getting students to reenroll for spring. We know that’s a really vital goal because it’s the right thing to do to help students complete their degrees, but it’s also a financially important thing to do, because of the vital role that student tuition and fees play. We increased undergraduate tuition by the higher ed price index this past year. We’re looking at graduate and law tuition, which were not increased last year, to see if there is an opportunity and if it would make sense to make increases there. In addition to that, George talked a little bit about energy savings recently with the Trane partnership and the way that will provide us with some significant budgetary benefits. In addition to that, he talked about auxiliary sharing, and the ways that housing and dining, the way that there’s a game-sharing model where some of that comes back centrally to the university, to address our budget deficit. Our campus footprint has shrunk a little bit. You probably heard about Lorado Taft, how we’re stepping away from the Lorado Taft campus, which will also provide budgetary savings because we won’t have the investment there in upgrading some of the systems that had seriously deteriorated. But we also won’t have the operations of keeping that campus open. In addition to that, we really looked at increasing enrollment with community college partnerships and to serve adult learners. You probably have heard us talk about some of those types of recruitment strategies to serve a broader population of students.

We’ve also talked quite a bit in this group about academic efficiencies; so, things like reducing low enrollment courses, things like reducing curricular complexity, to try and make our pathways for degrees more streamlined for students, but also more efficient for us in terms of our resource perspective.

In addition to that, we’ve looked at financial aid strategic deployment. In fact, this year, we have about 200 fewer students enrolled, but our tuition revenue was up more than $1 million. And a lot of that had to do with the way that we deployed institutional aid. And George also talked about some of the other institutional aid strategies, I think, at University Council. Some of you may have been present there. Where we’re looking at leveraging our AIM HIGH dollars that come from the state of Illinois and to be able to offer housing grants to students where they can get up to $2,500 per year for living on campus, to help defray the cost of living on campus. And so, then they pay the remainder of that, which helps our budget situation, but also gives students an opportunity to live on campus and reap the benefits that generally accompany living on campus, in terms of involvement and accessing resources and general student success.

In addition to that, we’ve looked at some different ways to generate revenue through some of our more entrepreneurial units like Outreach, Engagement and Regional Development and some of the programs they offer and the way they’re pricing those programs. We’ve also been looking at some new programs; and so, we’re in the process of standing up cybersecurity degrees at the undergraduate and graduate level. The graduate courses are in the curricular process right now. Our colleagues in Sociology have submitted the paperwork for the degree path in criminology, which will also, hopefully, help us serve more students.

And so I’m sharing all of that to say, there’s a number of strategies that have been going on in terms of addressing the budget deficit. And so, John’s going to do a deep dive in a particular area, but it’s not only this area. These other things that I summarized are also being implemented and are ongoing.

**J. Acardo:** Thanks, Laurie. Again, just to add some additional context, as well, what I’m presenting on is specifically staff related. It does not affect any faculty lines or any faculty or instructional positions. Those procedures and those processes will continue to be followed. So, again, I’m presenting mainly on the staff area.

Three of the areas are heavily focused on kind of extra add-ons that staff see or can benefit from throughout the course of their employment here at NIU. Our main goal is to really focus on strategic administrative efficiencies and to ensure that we are meeting our core mission of serving our students in those regards.

So, I’m going to dive into some of the data, and I’ll add some context as we go and kind of explain, too, why some of these areas are being identified and give you some background and some scenarios and some situations that are real situations that have come up that can illustrate why this is an area of focus for strategy.

We’re going to look at overtime, add-pay, extra help and position activity. And within position activity, there are two specific areas that we pay attention to. Those are job enhancements that are done off-cycle. So, these are not part of our budgeted process. They’re things that happen throughout the year that aren’t planned for. Our goal is to be strategic. And so, we want to have some integrated process with our annual budgeting process to know what departments and divisions are thinking about restructuring, reorganizations, enhancements, promotions, all those things that go along with those employment lines. And so, we’ll talk a little bit about what that means and what that looks like and why that’s an important and critical area for us to become a lot more strategic with.

Also, with staffing refills and recruitments. As we look to become more strategic and also focus on how we can have operational efficiency with more administrative processes becoming more automated or more efficient – I’ll give some examples of that later on – we need to rethink and kind of reframe how we recruit and staff each of our organizational units with staff. And so, we’ll spend some time talking about what that looks like and some of those dollars to quantify really what we’re looking at an institutional scale about thinking strategically and how we might accomplish that throughout the course of the year.

All the data that’s being reported is for the time period of July 1 through November 10. We look year over year. So, we’re looking from 2023 to 2024 numbers. And in April, at the monthly leadership meeting and at various other meetings, we began to socialize these four strategic management pillars. It’s to slow or reduce the reliance on extra help. Extra help, for the most part, and the vast majority, are hired to help expedite or increase efficiencies within processes that already exist. One way that we can realize some potential cost savings is to slow that process down. We recognize that that may mean things may need to stop, be paused or slow down in that regard. But it is a way that we can potentially realize some cost savings over the course of that fiscal year. As we look at extra help, there were 94 units on campus at that point in time in April that were employing only one extra help position. The vast majority of them were to help increase or expedite administrative processes. So, again, when we look at the full universal picture of what’s happening in the extra help pillar, it is, a lot of the time, to help expedite or facilitate a more expedient process or administrative function.

The next is to look at potentially curtailing non-essential overtime. How I define non-essential is to flip that and tell you what essential overtime looks like. Essential overtime is for our core public safety or mission-critical elements around campus. So, you think of facilities, building maintenance, those things that require critical infrastructure attention and public safety. Those are essential overtime activities. Non-essential are for pretty much everything else. And on average, we see about $331,000 of overtime being dedicated to those particular activities. Again, these are areas that we are asking employees to help expedite or produce more efficiently paperwork processing, administrative functions or procedures. And so, asking for us to slow that down, put that on pause and reevaluate, do we need to do some of those things, allows us the space to do that.

Scrutinizing the need for add-pays and desk audits. On average, we spent about $390,000 on the assignment of additional duties or temporary upgrades. And so, we wanted to explore, is this really necessary. Again, I know that it is nice to have things done very expediently. But there’s a cost to that. And so, as we look at, at least temporarily, is there a way to help reduce costs in this area by reducing the spend in that particular area.

Now before I jump to the fourth pillar here, at no point have I said no. I’ve not said we’re not doing these things. We’re asking people to become a lot more strategic with the resources that we have. There is a recognition that we need to have open lines of communication. And there is a recognition that there may be a need for extra help. There may be a need for non-essential overtime and there may be a need for an add-pay or a temporary upgrade. We’re asking our leaders on campus focus on that being a last resort rather than the first resort. So, it’s putting us into a different mindset to think more strategically about what can we stop doing that isn’t adding value to our mission or to our students, but also places an emphasis on helping with the overall budget deficit mitigation strategies.

We’ll spend a lot of time in the next few slides talking about that last pillar, but generally, it refers to those two elements that I mentioned earlier, which are the off-cycle salary base adjustments, as well as the recruitment process. Are there things that we can potentially explore that could add in to administrative efficiencies, like sharing resources or potentially even evaluating whether or not we could blend positions into a higher level classification, add an addition comp to that role and add additional duties, thinking more strategically about how we manage staffing structures. In the light that we have and will continue to be automating a lot more things and producing a lot more administrative efficiencies. This returns capacity back to our work force to take on more transformational tasks and assignments. And so, we need to be strategic and forward thinking in that regard when developing and reviewing all of our organizational structures.

So, let’s look at some of the numbers. Over the course of the past several months, we continue to see a relative high use of non-essential overtime over the course of the last several months. However, that said, year over year, we’re seeing some pretty good reductions. With the numbers that I presented earlier, if we were to put a scale or a target on this, we’re about 17 percent to our goal there. We are continuing to see a reduction, month after month, of that non-essential overtime. So, we are making ground in that regard, by thinking more strategically, by slowing things down, by putting some of those non-essential things on pause and weaving them into work when it can get done. So, we are seeing gains in this area for having a reduction in overtime, year over year, at this point in time.

Same with add-pays. I know that’s small, so I’ll help kind of explain. When we look at add-pays, we’re really looking at the fund 02 and fund 04. All of our other fund numbers are specifically aligned with auxiliaries or grants. And so, we know with grants, there are special considerations that are aligned with those. So, we’re really looking at t he 02 and 04 funds, which are state funded positions. When we look at year-over-year costs or spend in regard to add-pays, we are seeing to date, a $251,000 reduction in add-pays. That is great. We’re making great ground in this particular area. Overall, we have seen a reduction of $545,000 year-over-year, in our add-pay spend. So, again, this is a sign that our leaders are thinking strategically and placing resources where they’re needed most. And again, we’re realizing some of those savings in this budget deficit mitigation strategy.

Extra help. So again, I mentioned extra help are those times we hire people maybe to help become more efficient or expedient in our processes. Year-over-year, we’re seeing a reduction of about 109 individuals at this point in time. However, our spend is about flat. We have about a flat amount of spending. What we’ve seen is, to offset some of that element, costs or the cost of that labor has increased in regard to producing our extra help workers and our lines. However, we are seeing, again, some savings beginning to pick up as you’re seeing in September and October. So, we hope to continue that trend to begin to see some spending reductions in that particular category.

So, now we’re going to transition to that fourth pillar. And that fourth pillar represents off-cycle increment or base salary adjustments. And those are based on a supervisor’s request for a review to reorganize, to enhance, to add in duties or to, in other way, reorganize their space. To date, since July 1 of this year, we have spent $1,467,856, so $1.46 million in base pay adjustments. These are things that were not planned for through the budgeting process. They came up over the course of the last four-and-a-half, five months. This is a significant area that we’re paying attention to and asking to put a pause on this particular element of our function. I’ll get into some of the reasons why in the next two slides. But this is an area that we are asking for more strategic thinking. Can we wait from doing off-cycle base adjustments? Is it really needed? Can we potentially shift duties or responsibilities, in the meantime, while we try to figure out a larger structural, more strategic structure for your organization at that next budget cycle? Year over year, again, we’re seeing that we are having about a flat, about a nearly flat total amount for spend, year over year, same point in time. That means that we’re on track to continue to have what we’ve seen in the past, which is a large number at the end of that fiscal year.

Refills. So, what we’ve typically seen, and I want to add in some stories or scenarios to this, is about our refills. We have been asking, and continue to encourage, strategic thinking when it comes to replacements for staff. One-to-one refills is what we’ve been seeing over the past several months. When I get the requests for refills, or for when I see things come through requesting a new position or positions to be searched for, I ask tough questions to help add in to what we’re looking for, in the strategic sense, is it really needed. Can we do something different? And what I often find is that we’re pushing forward positions that may have been vacant for several years. And so I ask the question, if these positions have been vacant for several years, why do we need them right now? Can we wait? Can we hold off? Can we reevaluate? Can we potentially do something different or more strategic with these resources instead of refilling a full new position?

And so, I want to draw attention to this number. In the queue right now, just this past week, that have not been posted for staff, there is about $2.5 million in new payroll that would be added if we were to recruit and hire all of those individual requests. And so, the call here is not no, but to say, we need to think strategically. Are these really needed? Is there an opportunity to potentially share resources interdepartmentally, intra-departmentally or across divisions? Are the positions absolutely necessary for our core critical missions? Or, are they nice-to-haves? All of these questions, we’re really asking our leaders and our supervisors to take back to their working groups and to their departments to see if there might be a different way. Again, we’re not saying no; but we’re asking that that yes should be one of the last resorts. These are always that we can continue to think more strategically and to really think about how automation and more administrative efficiencies might change that position in the months to come.

So, again, I’m sharing with you this information because they are big numbers, and they do play a role in continuing to grow our deficit. And so, these areas that we’re focused on encouraging more strategic thinking and administrative efficiencies in those regards to help with our overall budget deficit mitigation strategies.

So, kind of pulling this all together, what we’ve been working with, with our leaders on campus and certainly have been asking for feedback in many of these particular areas, is that, because of those particularly two last slides, we need to place a temporary pause on the job enhancement and unit organization requests, along with the temporary pause of non-essential hiring. What we are looking for is establishing working groups to come up with protocols and procedures that might help us get to a point where we’re thinking very strategically about those two particular elements.

Some of those ideas that are floating out there that I’m sure you’ve heard from colleagues and, again, we’re socializing these ideas and concepts and soliciting ideas for more, but also trying to get what will work if we do go down a path of creating a position-controlled environment for staff. What does that look like? How might we gain share from that and potentially realize savings to the central university to help with the deficit mitigation strategy.

Same with a realignment of having all of these requests occur on the annual budget cycle. Would that work? How do exceptions get vetted and evaluated and approved, if that’s needed; because we know there will need to be exceptions. Again, we’re not saying no, but we’re trying to put some protocols and procedures so that more analysis can be done before we get to that yes point. And see if there is a different way, a different path forward.

The other and last option that we’re focused on developing working groups is to ask the question: Is there an opportunity now to look at shared service models for commonly provided services to campus departments? We’re setting up working groups and calling out for volunteers on those particular groups, and we’ll be establishing them over the next few weeks to look and see if this is possibility and to begin looking at what those options might be to help with administrative enhancements. When you have common core functions that are able to be centrally deployed, you realize administrative efficiencies. Someone is on leave or on vacation, you have someone that might be able to step in right away. There’s also deep knowledge and training as more efficient in that regard, as well.

So, all of these are being considered. But I did want to at least share with you some of the data that we’re seeing in those four areas that we had identified in April and certainly ask for any type of solicitation, comments, feedback, questions on any of those.

**B. Creed:** Thank you, John. And as Therese walks up to the mic, I just want to say I appreciate your willingness to share the data, to come and share what’s going on. Because, while none of this is directly tied to faculty, like salary and positions, it does change the work that we engage with, and helps us understand, potentially, some of the frustrations we have; and also ways, if we find recommendations, then I think that’s one of the things we’d like to solicit from the group, either here or afterward. It can help alleviate the burden of the staff, for us or for our students, if we can identify areas for those efficiency gains and also helps contextualize when something is slower than we’re used to or something like that. Therese?

**T. Arado:** Thanks, John. I’ll start with I do recognize the struggles that are going on, and I’m the broken record in the room, and I know that. You started and then alluded to this too, that – you’re talking about staff. I am a faculty member, I’m a 12-month faculty member, so I have a really weird position. I lost the administrative support in my department five years ago, and it has never been brought back. Guess who does that work now? Me, as well as a couple of my colleagues. We lost our extra help person we had, who we got because we had no other assistants when this started in the summer, and now guess who does that work? So, these changes do directly impact us, not just staff. And our staff, we have for years said are the backbone of the institution. And we’re talking about ways to spread the work around for people who are already significantly at max. I can’t say people are at 150 percent, because you can’t be, but people are at their max, and they’re exhausted. And you hear that in people’s voices. People keep doing their work. They keep getting this work done, but you hit a wall. I’ve heard this topic, and multiple versions of it, and every time I hear it – and I know there are new people in the room, and then there are people like me, like we’ve been here for so long. I know you’re trying to get out this, but at what point do we just break, because we can’t pass it on to somebody else. We need an actual – maybe we don’t need $3 million worth of new positions, but we might need $2 million worth of new positions legitimately. They haven’t been doing it – I haven’t had someone for five years. It takes its toll. People who have had those positions open, they’re possibly at breaking point or past. I need that lens to be kept on things, because it’s frustrating. I know you have a hard job. I’m not saying this is easy, but I have to get up and say, it impacts every single one of us, and I can’t even imagine asking operating staff that I work with to take on something else. And that’s why I take on things, because I can’t do that. And so, I just had to say it again.

**J. Acardo:** I want to thank you, and I really appreciate you sharing that feedback. [applause] Again, thank you, and it is taken well. I hear that at meetings I go to and do the same presentations. And this is heavy, hard conversations to have, when we’re looking at ways in which we can help with our overall financial disposition. But I think part of where you’re going to get tired of me saying the words, strategy and strategic, comes into play is that I think we really need to think how can we create more efficiencies. I think a really good example of this is what we’re working on right now in HR, and that is our time and labor. In 2021, the university went out and explored how can we become more efficient in the work that we do. And one of the top tier items that was identified was timekeeping. We still in 2024, still maintain time sheets by paper. We spend $60,000 printing time sheets in HR every year. It takes up 150 percent of two employees in HR. And we, actually, quantified it in 2021 by doing a survey. Fifteen percent of our admin support’s daily routine is consumed with chasing people down for timecards, making sure that they are correct, entering in those paper timecards into an excel sheet that then gets uploaded into a file, then has to get validated and approved by the supervisor. That then gets redistributed back to the department so they can then upload all of the signed time sheets so that we can go in and actually audit and look at the comments to see what different work groups [inaudible] in each of those particular settings so that we can then manually apply all of the different pay rules to that person’s salary. We’ve contracted with a company to help us automate that entire process. So, this will return, within a few months’ time, 15 percent time back to our staff. So, where we think strategically, we know what a few months’ time, 15 percent, is going to be returned. And so, now we can really focus on some of the work that needs to get done and, potentially, realign how we structure our staffing strategy to provide that administrative support that you need in a way that we know is more strategic and focused on those more transformational things. I really appreciate you sharing that feedback, and it is well taken. I appreciate you bringing it forward. I share and empathize with you in that regard, as well. But I think we really need to focus on some of those strategies and that automation.

I don’t know, Laurie, there were a few other automations that came online recently from the Academic Affairs perspective that I know we’re starting to see some of that return and those savings, as well.

**L. Elish-Piper:** Probably the newest efficiency is that we have a system called [Curriculum](https://american.curriculog.com/). If any of you were on curriculum committees, you’ve been trained on that to know that, in the past, our curricular processes were done pretty manually, and we had staff who were, oftentimes, formatting and then distributing those, and then getting back the feedback and making the corrections and then submitting those to the next level. Now that we have the Curriculum system, everything is in that one system, which makes it a lot more efficient, easier to track, and it’s a lot less of that sort of manual printing things out and distributing things that used to take up a pretty significant time for some of our staff members who support either department, college or university curriculum.

Another space that we implemented some efficiencies are with centralized room scheduling. Used to be that individual staff members were locating rooms and scheduling rooms and making sure that the room would accommodate the size of the class. Now that we’re doing that all centrally through the online system, that’s another time savings. Those are two specifically in Academic Affairs that come to mind.

**J. Acardo:** And I think, once we have known what these are – and our conversation yesterday at our monthly leadership group was focused on this – is knowing that these efficiencies are coming. How might we think more strategically about utilizing the staffing resources that we have to really find a way to support all campus areas in a more transformational means.

**J. Slagstad:** Hi, I’m Jim and I represent operating staff. I get two things: The first is that we’ll say, while the conversations have been hard and frustrating, it is true that they are conversations and we have gotten positions that had not been [inaudible] for a while posted, so that has happened. I appreciate that it’s not just a no. At the same time, I think one of my major frustrations is that there was this conversation about restructure efficiencies, change things, combine jobs. And now there’s this conversation about, well, we might pause that. It’s difficult to be told, hey, you need to restructure, but also, maybe we’re not going to let you restructure. So, that’s just my feedback on that. I realize that you’re not there announcing that that’s officially there yet, but that’s hard when, how can you combine jobs, we also might not let you combine jobs. How do you add tasks and just increase compensation instead of rehiring, but we might not let you do that. It makes our planning a little harder. That’s the thing that I’ve heard from lots of people on operating staff where largely we complain about you guys mostly.

**J. Acardo:** I appreciate your comments and feedback. And, again, I wouldn’t be here if I wasn’t truly interested in hearing what you all had to say. I do appreciate the comments and the feedback, because we need to get it right. And getting it right means – we have a complex organization that has many different facets. So, again, I just want to reiterate a line that I said earlier: I’m not saying no. What we’re asking for is to kind of tap the breaks, put a pause on this, and in the context of this pause that we’re implementing is to talk to your division leader, because they are the ones that can determine which is essential and what needs to be pushed forward. So, while we’re pausing, I want to kind of also add in the caveat that we want to have open lines of communication. So, contact me directly. Contact your division leaders. Hey, John, I just can’t do this without this position. And it will be considered. That’s all part of this process. I don’t know what is essential. You do. And so, I’ll ask the tough questions in our meetings, but at the end of the day, it’s your decision. And so, we need to have kind of that open line of communication, add a bit more analysis behind what we’re doing, and achieve the results that we know we can do.

**K. Thurmaier:** Good afternoon. Kurt Thurmaier. I’ve been teaching and studying budgeting for about 35 years. I worked in the Wisconsin State Budget Office for four years. So, I know about position controls and so on. And I appreciate that all these things can improve efficiencies, and that’s great. But when you keep using the word, strategic, and you don’t do strategic thinking, to me that’s a problem. We spend $1 million on two people in our salary base, the athletic director and the football coach. $1 million across our operating staff, who actually make the university work, is a strategic decision. So, the leadership can talk about strategic, but we’re not asking big questions that are strategic, like: Can we afford to be in the football athletic entertainment business that we’re in. If you look at the SIC code, football is entertainment. We spend a lot of money on entertainment and yet we’re asking people to have five years of not having an administrative assistant. We’re asking department chairs to do clerical work putting together fundraising letters, which I did for 13 years, because we don’t have staff to do it. So, I find the word, strategic, overused and under-actually-appreciated.

**J. Acardo:** Thanks for the feedback. [applause]

**D. Valentiner:** Hi, my name is David Valentiner. I’m from Psychology. I think that there is a problem that we share, and it’s that we’re relatively underfunded, but we have a public mission. Because we’re not getting funds that are adequate to do the work that we’re being asked to do, it creates a tightness, a workload that’s maybe somewhat unreasonable for faculty, for staff, for administrators. And I think, also, that that same stress is felt down at the student level. I think, though, that the faculty are uniquely charged with protecting the academic rigor of our programs. And I think that there are demands on us that eventually translate into doing less for our students. And so, I just want to remind the faculty that that is our charge. When we’re asked to reduce curricular complexity, for example, imagine a major in which every major takes exactly the same course. That would be the lowest level of curricular complexity. But we shouldn’t allow that, right? So, I just wanted to call on the faculty to protect academic rigor. [applause]

**L. Elish-Piper:** David, I appreciate that comment, and in reducing curricular complexity, I don’t think the goal is to create a step-by-step program. Through shared governance, faculty do have oversight and control of curriculum and the assessments that are used, the student learning outcomes. And so, I just want to confirm that, in reducing curricular complexity, we’re looking at things like prerequisites. We’re looking at things like students get caught off on a path and then can’t take another course, because they can’t get a prerequisite that’s necessary for a course. Is it really necessary or not? I think there are opportunities to look at things like that. I think there are also opportunities to look at some of our programs that are very strong in overall numbers. When we look at particular specializations, they might be very small, and it’s difficult to offer those courses. So, I think if we look at curricular complexity, that’s what we’re trying to look at, making a pathway that’s more accessible and completable (I don’t know if that’s a word) more able to be completed by students, not necessarily taking it and having it be a lock-step curriculum that everyone marches through in the same way. We know that electives and choices are really important as they complete their degrees, to make sure that they’re being prepared for their goals and for their futures. So, I just wanted to clarify that point, and I definitely appreciate your feedback to remind us to keep that in mind as we move forward.

**S. Sharp:** Hello, Shane Sharp, Sociology. I’ll probably be very inarticulate about this. I have the feeling that short-term solutions to panics that we’re having with this budget can lead to long-term problems, because I’m of the belief that a strong and vibrant staff leads to strong and vibrant faculty to be very productive, both in research and teaching. And that leads to a strong and vibrant student body, a university where students do want to come to. If we basically kill off these positions, for strategic reasons, to save money in the short-term, it might lead to long-term negative consequences that perhaps we don’t consider trying to fix the problem in front of us. I just felt the need to say that.

**J. Acardo:** Thank you for that. And you and I are aligned there. I completely agree with you, and I think some of the items that I had on that previous slide are trying to get at that point. And again, we’re here to talk about feedback and ideas and finding solutions. And some of the ideas that are being discussed right now is that position control. Is that an opportunity to potentially find a way to help manage through? Is having that realignment of our budgeting process to include reorganization, a more strategic way for us to see on a holistic picture all of the changes that are happening within divisions. So, yeah, I absolutely agree with you that finding ways for long-term solutions and viability are critical and important.

**B. Creed:** We’ll have one more comment.

**J. Akst:** Hi, Jason Akst, Communication. I salute you doing the hard work on cost savings and so forth to the others who spoke. And I would chime in and add I think you get more buy-in and more support if you also were more transparent in some of the initiatives that the university just does. For example, one of my bread-and-butter courses is a basic graphic design course. I use Adobe products pretty often. I was amazed to learn a few months back that the university had sprung for entire access for everybody at the university. I can’t even imagine what an extraordinary expenditure that was, which I would argue is probably not necessary. But I’m somebody who uses that stuff everyday and heard about it out of the blue. The partnership, which means a contract, I think you should be more transparent and disclose the dollar value of the Togetherall system, the initial contract with Braven was $4 million. There’s a lot of money going out that people sort of learn after the fact that I think could maybe be examined more closely. And then the last thing, and I hate to say this, and thankfully I’m not in charge of it. But the new room assignment system that Provost Elish-Piper mentioned, at least in my department, everybody hates it. It’s a freakin’ nightmare. It kicks out rooms all the time. We have to start over. I know one person who has an ADA compliant situation, who is constantly having to rearrange it. Anyway, thank you.

**J. Acardo:** Thank you.

**B. Creed:** I appreciate the conversation – yeah, okay, go for it.

**B. Swedlow:** Brendon Swedlow, Political Science. A question, since we’re dealing with human resources. What does the analysis look like for the rest of the human resources: faculty and administrators? I was shocked to learn that we are spending about a quarter of our budget, $100 million a year on top-level administrators. $100 million a year on top-level administrators. I just don’t understand that, and I wonder what the process looks like for gaining efficiencies in top-level administration.

**J. Acardo:** I’d need to run that number again, but I know there was a presentation – wasn’t there a presentation on that a few months ago?

**B. Creed:** Yeah, last time you came, I believe.

**J. Acardo:** Yeah, that we did a top-level analysis of the funding around. And I don’t know if that’s an accurate number. I can go back and look at that particular presentation. But again, it’s part of this presentation, administrative is wrapped into staff, and so that is part of that analysis that I presented earlier.

**B. Swedlow:** Where is the top level administrator piece of that analysis?

**J. Acardo:** I would need to get those numbers to you. And again, I think we did present on that a few months ago. I’ll ask Ben maybe to remind me, and I can take a look at that.

**B. Swedlow:** Thank you.

**B. Creed:** Thank you, John. [applause] I think the takeaway is that, one, that we’re able to have more tangible conversations and specific conversations and informed conversations, is a good thing as we continue pushing forward. I know President Freeman and her senior administration are committed to sharing a budget website with more information on it. And this is a march toward transparency, toward better principles. It will not be the final point, but it will give us a chance to continue pushing for more transparency and more accurate reporting so we can understand and contextualize it. I appreciate the willingness to come here and hear from us. And I think the point about defining what our strategic priorities are in a public way, I think that is something I will be taking away from this and pushing to understand better exactly what those strategies are, rather than strategic meaning reduction, maybe strategic meaning investments in certain ways, and trying for myself to better understand it, and for us as a collective better understand it as well. But I do appreciate the comments and the elevation of concerns and the impacts of how, while this is staff focused, it impacts our faculty, it impacts our students, it impacts the health of the institution. Appreciate the conversation today, and I do know John is open for conversation. Or, you can share it with me and I can advocate or have those conversations as I can be supportive in this role.

**IX. New Business**

A. Approve search committee structure for Dean of the Graduate School per

~~FS~~ NIU Bylaws Article 10.3.2.1(B)

Laurie Elish-Piper, Executive Vice President and Provost

**B. Creed:** That brings us to new business. We have one item for new business, which is the approval of the search committee structure for the dean of the Graduate School. I just want to note as Provost Elish-Piper comes up that there is a typo in item A where it should not be “per Faculty Senate Bylaws.” It should be “per NIU Bylaws.” It’s correct in the packet on page 6. And with that in mind.

Actually, before we go on, John?

**J. Acardo:** That number was [inaudible] senior admin.

**B. Creed:** All right, so the number for senior admin was $2.7 million as of fiscal year 2023. So, my guess is it’s categorization differences, potentially, of what a senior level administrator is. But that is the number from 2023 to go back to that.

What we’ll need for item A to approve is that we’ll need a first, a second, and then Provost Elish-Piper will lead the discussion on this item. And then we will take a voice vote to approve the search committee structure. If I could have a first, or a motion, to approve the search committee structure for the dean of the Graduate School? Thank you, George. A second? Thank you, Jim. And so, now I’ll invite Provost Elish-Piper up to lead the discussion and answer any questions if there are any. Again, you can see the request on page 6 of the packet.

**L. Elish-Piper:** Currently, Dr. Jessica Reyman is serving as the acting dean of the Graduate School, and so, in putting together a search committee, we looked at the structure of the search committee that was done about four years ago when was the last time that we were looking for a dean of the Graduate School. And so, within that, the search committee chair would be Robert Brinkmann, the dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences. We always have a fellow sitting dean serve as a search committee chair. And then we would have seven faculty members, one from each of the academic colleges. And in doing that, we would want to make sure that we had representation that related to Ph.D. and other doctoral programs, masters programs, and also Graduate Council. In addition to that, we would have one faculty member from the library. We would also have two graduate student members. We would have one staff member from the Graduate School. We would have one administrative member representing Academic Affairs, and we would have one member from Faculty Senate, who would represent shared governance and be a liaison back to Faculty Senate. So, that is the structure of the search committee that is being proposed today.

**B. Creed:** Thank you. Are there any questions or comments about the structure of the search committee? All right, then what remains for us is to take a vote to approve the structure of the search committee. All in favor of approving the search committee structure as presented, please say aye.

**Members:** Aye.

**B. Creed:** Opposed? Abstentions? All right, that passes.

**X. 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 will be a report from the Faculty Advisory Council to the IBHE, and Dr. Tiffany Puckett, who is our representative to that group, will share a report.

**T. Puckett:** Good afternoon. I do have a brief report from the most recent Faculty Advisory Council meeting, which was held this past Friday at Rosalind Franklin University. They hosted the meeting. We had a great welcome by the provost, and we took a tour of their simulation lab for their medical school, which was very interesting.

Some of the quick updates that we have: We still have a library liaison position available on the Faculty Advisory Council. So, if someone is interested in that position, you can reach out to me so I can provide information related to that position.

The legislative liaison told us about two bills that are going on right now. There is now a House bill that pretty much mirrors the Senate bill on the higher ed funding bill that I talked about last time. And then there is also a pending bill that is focusing on Tier II pension plans. They’re trying to propose some changes to the pension plan that will allow it to be a better plan, to get more benefits for Tier II retirees.

Also, there is still currently no faculty member on the Illinois Board of Higher Ed. Faculty Advisory Council has submitted multiple names to IBHE, and the chair of IBHE says they have submitted those names to the Governor’s Office multiple times, but they still have not assigned a faculty member to IBHE.

IBHE liaison reported that public universities are at their highest enrollment in eight years. There has been an increase in African American, Latino and transfer students, and there is an overall increase in community college enrollment at 7.4 percent. IBHE representative David Smalley will be talking to us more about going deeper into those numbers at our December meeting.

At our business meeting, we continued to discuss the important role of librarians as faculty members, and FAC will not be signing the [CARLI statement](https://www.carli.illinois.edu/membership/Importance-of-Librarians) that was issued related to the importance of library faculty members. But we will issue a position statement citing administrative rules and directing it back to that statement.

We did have the opportunity to have the chair of IBHE come and present. He had some interesting things that are worth speaking about. He talked about how they’re in the process of wrapping up their duties related to providing assistance with the drafting of the higher ed funding bill, that now they’re really more in a technical advisory role, but he did indicate that there is still negotiations going on related to the Senate bill and the House bill version of the funding bill, and they’re still discussing how endowments will be used in that funding formula.

He wanted to have a discussion around workplace development on campuses and how that’s working. I did share that Northern Illinois University has the Center for Governmental Studies; and under that center, we do have a workforce development and economic analysis service where we have assisted with workplace development plans, including more recently working with the Illinois State Department of Commerce to come up with a five-year plan.

We did ask him about why there is still no faculty member on IBHE, and he just reiterated that they sent the names up to the Governor’s Office multiple times. There is a concern, because the student member has recently been appointed, but we still don’t have a faculty member on that board.

Coming out of the working groups, there is going to be a prior learning assessment survey that will be emailed to me in the upcoming weeks, so I will need to get that survey out to the person who will be responsible for filling out that higher learning assessment.

Our next meeting is December 20 on zoom. Are there 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:** Up next is the University Advisory Committee to the Board of Trustees report. When they met, there were updates shared about the progress on the higher education funding bill, which Tiffany just referenced. They received a presentation from one of our faculty members, Lindsay Harris, about her work with graduate and undergraduate students. And that continues the trend of the Board of Trustees wanting to understand how faculty research provides opportunities and supports for our students. The Board of Trustees received their annual information report related to the oversight of the academic programs at NIU. That report typically only contains information on those programs, which have gone through their eight-year review process with IBHE or the relevant cycle for review per disciplinary and college accreditation standards. During that presentation and in response to it, Trustee Butler asked if it was possible for the Board of Trustees to receive annual updates on the health of academic programs via the annual report. This was affirmed by other members of the Board of Trustees; and in the public conversation, it was agreed in principle to add a university goal in alignment with adding an annual program report, which would help the Board of Trustees better understand the status of programs on campus. In those public comments, it was suggested by President Freeman and Provost Elish-Piper that there be a shared governance component to this, that faculty ought to have a voice in the development of measures. Since that meeting, I have had conversations with both the Faculty Senate Steering Committee and with the Academic Planning Council about what those measures might look like, what those reporting structures might look like and how we can ensure faculty have voice in the determination of the measures, but also in contextualizing them when they go in front of the Board of Trustees. And I’ve also been in conversation with Provost Elish-Piper and will continue to work to ensure that faculty have a voice in this process going forward.

They received updates on the financial situation of the university, and it was clear from pretty much every subcommittee conversation that the Board of Trustees has an expectation for that balanced budget by fiscal year ’26, and this was included during the annual performance review of President Freeman and the setting of expectations for this upcoming year. That’s all I have unless anybody else wants to add anything.

C. Baccalaureate Council – no report

Alicia Schatteman, Vice Provost for Academic Affairs

**B. Creed:** There is no report from the Baccalaureate Council.

D. Faculty Rights and Responsibilities Committee – no report

Therese Arado, Chair

**B. Creed:** And no report from the Faculty Rights and Responsibilities Committee.

E. Social Justice Committee – report

Ben Creed, FS President

**B. Creed:** I’ll be giving the Social Justice Committee report. The Social Justice Committee has continued to meet monthly and been engaged in a few key tasks. First, the Social Justice Committee has been asked, and has provided, feedback on a set of self-reflection questions, which will be shared with academic units and colleges so that they can use them if they so choose when reviewing their promotion and tenure policies and guidelines that they will be engaged with in this upcoming calendar year.

The second task the Social Justice Committee has identified focus areas for the remainder of this academic year, which will guide the work into the future, into upcoming academic years, as well. Within that, the first priority is to learn from faculty about opportunities for improvement, as well as barriers and challenges that they are facing here at NIU, in order to develop a data-informed approach to future efforts of the Social Justice Committee. There will be invitations and opportunities for faculty to share perspectives and to participate in efforts to better understand ways to improve campus.

The next meeting of the Faculty Senate Social Justice Committee will focus on developing that approach and how to best learn from faculty on campus.

The second priority will be to continue work on supporting promotion and tenure across campus so that the whole system of promotion and tenure from the academic unit through the Board of Trustees reflects the principles outlined in the Faculty Senate Bylaws.

And that is the report from the Social Justice Committee.

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

Emily McKee, FS/RGE Liaison/Spokesperson

**B. Creed:** We have no report today from the Rules, Governance and Elections Committee.

G. Student Government Association – report

Ja’kobe Jones, SGA President

Manny Corpuz, Speaker of the Senate

**B. Creed:** Manny, I think I saw you. I don’t know if there is a report from SGA? No.

H. Operating Staff Council – report

Natasha Johnson, President

**B. Creed:** Operating Staff Council, looks like Jim has a report for us.

**J. Slagstad:** Previously, I shared that we did a priority survey out to our constituents, and what came back for what is most on the minds of the operating staff is university financial status; job upscaling, rescaling and training; and then mental health. So, that is what Natasha plans on using to guide our work going forward.

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

I. Supportive Professional Staff Council – report

Felicia Bohanon, President

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

**XI. 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: Nov 20, Jan 22, Feb 19, Mar 26, Apr 23

Q. [Fall 2024 Commencement](https://www.niu.edu/commencement/)

Graduate Commencement – Saturday, Dec. 14, 2024

Undergraduate Commencement – Sunday, Dec. 15, 2024

**B. Creed:** That brings us to informational items. A through O are the standard minutes and Policy Library. There are, I believe, three policies currently open for comment in the Policy Library. Please do feel free to look at those and leave comments.

Our next meeting won’t be until the new calendar year, January 22.

And the final announcements are commencement announcements, and I’ll share those when I send my summary, as well. But do please attend if you are able to.

**XII. Adjournment**

**B. Creed:** That brings us to adjournment. Do I have a motion to adjourn the meeting. David is first. Second? Second, thank you, Dan. All in favor of adjourning the meeting, say aye.

**Members:** Aye.

**B. Creed:** Opposed? Thank you.

Meeting adjourned at 4:30 p.m.