TRANSCRIPT

University Council
Wednesday, April 28, 2021, 3 p.m.
Microsoft Teams Meeting
Northern Illinois University
DeKalb, Illinois

All University Council members will receive an Outlook invitation to this Teams meeting. Others wishing to join the meeting, please send your request to Pat Erickson at pje@niu.edu.


VOTING MEMBERS ABSENT: Collins, Royce


I. CALL TO ORDER

L. Freeman: It looks like the clock has ticked to 3, at least on my computer.

Meeting called to order at 3 p.m.

II. VERIFICATION OF QUORUM

L. Freeman: So, perhaps I’ll ask Pat to verify that we have a quorum.

P. Erickson: We do have a quorum.

III. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

L. Freeman: Wonderful. In that case, can I have a motion to adopt today’s agenda?

T. Arado: So moved.

L. Garcia: Second.

L. Freeman: All right, Arado and Garcia moved and second. Pat, do we need to vote in the chat box?

P. Erickson: We certainly can vote in the chat box unless you prefer a voice vote.
L. Freeman: I’m okay for both adoption of the agenda and the minutes approval for voting by voice. Does anybody object to that? All right, all in favor unmute and say aye.

Members: Aye.

L. Freeman: Opposed? Abstain? All right, we have an agenda.

IV. APPROVAL OF THE MARCH 31, 2021 MINUTES

L. Freeman: Next, I’ll ask for a motion for approval of the minutes of the March 31, 2021 meeting.

T. Arado: So moved.

L. Freeman: Again, moved by Arado. And a second.


L. Freeman: Second by Nicholson. All right, and we’ll do the unmuted voice vote. So, as we feel like we’re moving back to more normal, all in favor, unmute and say aye.

Members: Aye.

L. Freeman: Any opposed, same sign. Any abstentions? All right.

V. PUBLIC COMMENT

L. Freeman: The next item on the agenda then is Roman numeral V, Public Comment. Pat, has anybody asked for the opportunity to speak with us this afternoon?

P. Erickson: No, we have no requests for public comment today.

L. Freeman: Thank you.

VI. NIU PRESIDENT LISA FREEMAN’S ANNOUNCEMENTS

L. Freeman: In that case, we will move to Roman numeral VI, which is the president’s announcements. And so, good afternoon, everybody. As though you need a reminder, I do want to say that this is our final meeting of the 2021 academic year, and this is certainly one that University Council will remember for a long time; not just because of COVID-19 mitigation and virtual meetings, polls expertly executed by Pat Erickson and chat box collaboration expertly moderated by Jeffry Royce or Jay Monteiro – Jay, we’re giving you a vote of confidence here for what’s yet to come – this was the first year also of a reimagined and streamlined University Council, a structure that was designed to create efficiency and broadened participation. And the success of our work inspired change in the Student Government Association. I think we have a lot to be proud of for taking on the task and successfully completing the task of streamlining UC and reforming shared governance.

This was also memorable because it was the first year in a long time that our first meeting kicked off with a discussion of increased total enrollment as the result of increased numbers of new
freshmen and increased retention of continuing students. That was really important to us from every standpoint of our mission, and it was something we worked for hard. It was great to be able to celebrate that with you this year.

It was a year, because of COVID, when we talked about a university budget that was so adversely impacted by the pandemic that we learned not to flinch when we were discussing budget shortfalls in the tens of millions of dollars. It’s also a year when we all got better at coping with uncertainty, adapting to change and to making decisions on the basis of the information available, even when we didn’t have the whole picture.

This year was also special because it was a year when we had to pay special attention to reports about IBHE activity as the state board conducted a strategic planning process designed to fulfill their statutory obligation to prepare a master plan for the development, expansion, integration, coordination and efficient utilization of facilities, curricula and standards in teaching, research and public service. And that is, in fact, a quote from the statute that charges them to do that. The work is wrapping up, but there is still time to comment. The final draft is posted on the IBHE website with an opportunity to submit comments, and there is another opportunity to participate in a town hall, otherwise known as a community engagement session, tomorrow, April 29, from 4 to 6 p.m.

Registration for that opportunity is also on the IBHE website. I know that Pat has distributed the links and, although you should have received them already, I’ll ask someone to put the links in the chat before the end of the meeting, so everyone has access to them today while we’re thinking of it.

Despite all of the unusual working conditions, this was a year when our shared governance was incredibly productive, and productive on a number of fronts. We saw this in the discussions we had and in the reports that UC received. And I want to thank the entire university community for contributing to the initiative focused on administrative efficiency, process digitization and automation. Together, we agreed upon university priorities, and we’re moving forward. And your continued patience and commitment will be important as we take strides. And this work will continue into the coming year for sure.

I want to recognize Faculty Senate for the excellent work of the Ad Hoc Social Justice Committee and for their approval of the standing Social Justice Committee going forward. This committee and its structure will support our long-term commitment to social and racial justice, equity, inclusion and belonging, help us do the hard work needed, work that will certainly continue long into the future.

And speaking of work that will extend beyond this academic year, I want to update everyone on the recommendations of a group that I asked Professor David Gunkel to convene to look at issues related to cases where the technology and social media platforms that our community relies on to connect, collaborate, teach and learn are misused – misused by Huskies or by others to cause harm to members of our community through harassment, intimidation, defamation or stalking. In my charge to that group, I noted that a number of universities have implemented cyberbullying policies focused on defining and limiting these types of undesirable behaviors. But I also noted that the development of such policies is inherently challenging, because of the necessity to weigh an individual’s right to freedom of expression against the right to freedom from harm of those targeted. Moreover, cyberbullying policies always inevitably intersect with university directives that cover issues beyond freedom of expression; issues like acceptable use of university information computing and communication resources, student or employee conduct, harassment and discrimination policies. With all of this complexity in mind, I asked this group, headed by Professor
Gunkel, to provide the university with a framework for moving forward as only a first step toward addressing the concerns. And the group just reported back to me a couple days ago with a few well-researched recommendations to help NIU address concerns about the various forms of harassment through electronic communications. And their suggestions include surveying our community and then using the response to guide updates to both current NIU policies and also to guide development of a new cyberbullying resource that we could integrate into the NIU website. Obviously, to accomplish these things would be putting off much of the work until the next academic year, and participation of shared governance will be essential. I expect both Faculty Senate and University Council to be engaged in the fall. And, Pat, I will submit to go out with the UC minutes the recommendations that I received from Dr. Gunkel and his group so that they can be posted on the UC website for people to see.

And my last item today is one that I really come to with great pride and pleasure and also kind of a sense of sorrow. And that is, I want to thank and recognize Kendall. Kendall Thu is completing his term as Faculty Senate president and University Council chair. And I think we all know that our progress, our collaboration and our productivity would not have been possible without his leadership. Last spring, when first University Council and then the Board of Trustees approved our new shared governance structure that changed the size and composition of both Faculty Senate and University Council, Kendall said, and I’m quoting here, “I will consider it a success if a year from now people feel more ownership in shared governance, if policies are passed more easily and if the Faculty Senate feels empowered to make academic policy.” Well, Kendall, I think based on this past year, you can claim success. And I have to say I’m not surprised. Pat, could you project the slide I shared? As evidenced in the pictures on this slide, it’s clear, at least to me, that Kendall has been working with university leaders for change ever since he was a graduate student at the University of Iowa. The picture in the upper left corner here is a picture of Kendall with our mutual friend, Alex Cartwright, who currently serves as the president of the University of Central Florida. And while you would expect Kendall to look older in most pictures than he did in that picture from his graduate student days at Iowa, I will say when I look at the rest of the pictures on the slide, which reflect different periods of time in Kendall’s tenure at NIU as a faculty member and a member of shared governance, he’s hardly aged at all. And I think that that’s a testament to the joy that he finds in the work that he does. It doesn’t give him gray hair. It gives him smile lines. And that’s just a wonderful tribute to what he brings to us every day.

And in all seriousness, on behalf of the university community, Kendall, I want to say that we appreciate your work on behalf of shared governance. You’ve taken on big initiatives, and your positive impact at this institution will be felt for generations. As a token of our gratitude and in recognition of your service, I am going to present you with our traditional parting gift to Faculty Senate leaders, and that is the golden gavel. I’m going to try to show it on camera now so that everyone can see it. A little bit of glare from the shrink wrap there, but I think you can probably make out the golden gavel. And the inscription on the gavel says, “Kendall Thu. In recognition of your dedicated service to the Northern Illinois University Faculty Senate and University Council.” I want to ask all of us to unmute, offer applause and congratulations at this point.

N. Johnson [via chat]: Kendall, thanks for all you have done to move the university forward!

S. Weffer [via chat]: Kendall, thank you for your commitment to fighting for what’s right!

B. Ingram [via chat]: Thank you, Kendall!
T. Boston [via chat]: Thank you, Kendall, for being a voice for all!

V. Edghill-Walden [via chat]: Thank you, Kendall!

R. Brinkmann [via chat]: Thank you, Kendall!

B. Beyer [via chat]: Thanks, Kendall! It was an honor.

K. Wesener Michael [via chat]: Many thanks, Kendall!

T. Arado [via chat]: Congratulations!

L. Freeman: I see the chat box is lighting up with appreciation. I’ll put in a plug and remind everyone you can come to Fatty’s and show your appreciation. But, Kendall, before I turn the agenda over to you, I want to ask if you just want to say a few words about how you feel about your accomplishments and the time you spent as a faculty governance leader here at NIU.

K. Thu: Well, first of all, thank you, Lisa, for those very generous and kind words. It certainly wasn’t just me. There were a whole slew of faculty, staff and students that helped shepherd the revamping and the reimagining of shared governance. And we did it together. And that’s the way NIU has worked, in my experience, since I’ve been here. In addition to ending my career in shared governance, unless something remarkable happens in the next two months, I will be retiring at the end of June. And so, that doesn’t mean my connection to NIU will end completely, but it does mean that my current capacity will change. So, I have mixed feelings. I’m going to miss everybody, and I have a sense of gratitude, most of all toward people that I’ve worked with. Doesn’t make any difference what bylaws you work on, constitutional changes you make, whether you’re department chair, whether you’re the president of Operating Staff Council, it’s really remarkable that, when you get a good group of people in the room together, even if it’s a virtual room, good things happen.

And that’s really the take-away that I’ve had. It’s all the people that I’ve met and learned from and worked with through the years. And I’ve learned so much from all of you, and I will cherish the relationships that we have and will continue to have after I leave NIU.

So, David Valentiner asked me during our last Social Justice Committee, what advice I would give to other faculty in terms of values. And I said, I wouldn’t presume to offer anybody advice just to say that I’m just grateful for the opportunity that I’ve been given, and I look forward to seeing most of you, if not all of you, at Fatty’s at 5:30, so we can continue the celebration, and actually see each other in person. And hopefully, the rain will stay away. And I just want to thank all of you. And I want to thank President Freeman, I want to thank you for your leadership, your collegiality and your friendship, quite frankly. And I’m not going to name people by names, because I’m going to miss somebody. But I do think I want to say thank you to Pat Erickson, especially, because all of the stuff that we’ve done together, it would not have happened without Pat.

S. Klaper [via chat]: Yessss Pat!

T. Arado [via chat]: Pat is awesome!

K. Thu: And the one qualm that I have with Pat is her use of commas in sentence structure – she knows what I’m talking about. At one point during our trading of email message, I said, Pat, you
don’t have to use a comma at that point in the sentence, and she didn’t say anything. And then I thought, really, with all that Pat does, do I really have to quibble about a comma in a sentence. And from then on, Pat, as you’ll remember, I didn’t say anything about your placement of commas in my message or in my memos or whatever document I put together. So, thank you, Pat.

**P. Erickson** [via chat]: AP Style all the way!

**D. Douglass** [via chat]: Excessive comma gang.

**V. Edghill-Walden** [via chat]: Pat is amazing!

**J. Blazey** [via chat]: No way. Oxford commas rule!

**K. Thu:** But most of all, I just want to thank my faculty colleagues, the students, the staff. I’ve tried to be a voice for faculty first and foremost, and that’s where my heart and my passion resides. I think I’ll have more to say once I get a beer in me. So, thank you.

**F. Barnhart** [via chat]: Well stated, Kendall! We will miss you!

**L. Freeman:** Kendall, you are known for someone who can always stimulate thought-provoking debate and discourse. And with your comment about commas, we now have different factions of comma users taking over the chat box. It seems like this would be an excellent time for me to hand you the virtual gavel (I’ll give you the golden gavel at Fatty’s), but please take over the agenda as has been our custom.

**K. Thu:** Thank you, Lisa. And I see that Pat is going to lead the charge in advocating for Oxford style commas. So, Pat, go to it.

On to item VII on the agenda. Before we get to item VII, though, President Freeman mentioned the opportunity to comment on the IBHE strategic plan. And that’s actually what I was doing a little bit earlier in the day, which was preparing for remarks tomorrow. I don’t know, Simón Weffer, would you like to say a couple words very quickly about the suggested talking points that you sent to us and that we distributed.

**S. Weffer:** Sure. Hopefully, everyone got those talking points. If you didn’t, feel free to reach out to me. They revolve around two topics in particular. One of them is the push for dual credit. These are things like being able to take APs or community college courses or credit at other universities for students before they arrive at a four-year campus. And there is such a tremendous push to increase that coming from IBHE, which is really odd, because it has a deleterious effect, particularly on majors that you don’t necessarily see in high school. Speaking as a sociologist, there’s not a lot of sociology. Anthropology is hit or miss. But for me, looking from an equity lens, the school districts that have the students that do the most AP are also the wealthiest. And U.S. News and World Report rankings just came out. Several Chicago high schools were on there, including on my daughters’ high schools. But one of the reason they’re on there is because they offer so many particular options, and those options are not available at every Chicago high school. Those that know the inequality in Chicago education know that there are some schools that are more equal than others, to quote Orwell here. And then, of course, that magnifies when we start looking at rural districts, as
well, where they might not have the ability for community college access or a community college that has the programming or the infrastructure to provide options to high achieving students. And so, there’s been a huge push, and that’s one of them.

And then there’s a larger discussion, and President Freeman brought it up in Faculty Senate and maybe at University Council, I don’t know, we’ve been talking about this quite a bit in the past few weeks, so it’s all blending together. But a lack of emphasis about the importance of a college education and colleges and universities into civil society at large. And the IBHE’s plan doesn’t really talk about that. I said this last time for sure, but you don’t have things happen at the capitol on January 6 without a lack of understanding of civil society and not enough of the humanities and the social sciences and the critical skills and logical skills built in the bench signs as in engineering and engineering tech and HHS and all these things. And not to mention how important research and artistry done at our campuses is for the larger community. Just think of all the performances that the people in and around DeKalb get to enjoy because of the amazing skills of our students in VPA, and of our faculty in VPA. And I think of all the outreach that NIU does where staff and faculty and students take their time to interact with our larger community, because we believe fundamentally that the university is not a walled city where our interactions end at whatever the borders are of campus. That we constantly interact with high schools and middle schools and early childhood and police department. The list goes on and on. And I think the talking points speak to that a little bit, but I also think it’s important that all of you think about those things that are important that for your schools do that we give back to our community, but also those experiences happen in part because students, more often than not, are here for four years, plus or minus a semester, or a year or two, right? And [inaudible] in my time as an undergraduate.

L. Freeman [via chat]: The four-year university presidents and chancellors have asked for strong representation and voice during the plan implementation phase. We have made it clear we felt poorly represented in the initial planning process.

And so, I think those would be the major talking points. There might be other things if you look at the strategic plan that you have questions or comments about. President Freeman spoke about the early childhood education component that is being pushed, and that’s sort of combined with the dual credit. It’s this idea of, from my understanding, a terminal bachelor in applied sciences degree that community colleges would be able to grant. The legislation and the discussion in the IBHE says that it would only be early childhood education. But actually, the legislation that was proposed, though I don’t know what the status of that is, expanded that to bilingual education and special education. The idea that a community college is prepared to be able to give that sort of certification is really disturbing, because I think there’s a reason those – and this is coming from someone who’s mother trained people in bilingual and special ed for decades at DePaul University, and so I know exactly how important it is to stay in touch and current with the research and do the research and work in the schools and with the schools on these sorts of issues. And so to say that, well, community colleges should be able to give a bachelors degree on this despite the fact that they haven’t been accredited, despite the fact that, again from an equity lens, the only schools that are going to be able to take advantage of this are the wealthier and predominantly whiter school districts, that it’s just going to increase the inequality. And one of my problems that I’ll actually speak to if I can speak at the town hall is the lack of a true equity lens, which is understanding the deficiencies and the inequities before you enact a policy. And I think that’s where there’s a lot of lacking.
I think Dean Elish-Piper spoke at the last one about one of the programs that we have and partnerships we have at Elgin that solves the problem of early childhood education or works toward solving the problem of increasing the number of people in early childhood education. And right now there’s a lot of discourse that sort of like, well “four years” haven’t done it so let us do it. And, of course, our opinions are biased. We’re a four-year institution. We are protecting our turf. But I think it’s important turf to protect. I know that was a rather long soliloquy. If anyone has any further questions, please feel free to reach out. And, President Freeman, if I missed anything, please feel free to chime in.

H. Nicholson [via chat]: As a parent of a student in an elementary school dual-language program, I have concerns as well.

L. Elish-Piper [via chat]: When I spoke at the IBHE town hall meeting yesterday, there were only three others who made public comment. If you are considering making public comment at the IBHE town hall, I urge you to do so in order that more voices are heard. They do limit public comment to three minutes.

L. Freeman [via chat]: Thank you!

K. Thu: Thanks Simón. Lisa, do you have anything to follow up on?

L. Freeman: I put in the chat box the fact that the four-year presidents and chancellors had made it clear we didn’t think our voice was loud enough in the initial planning phase. The IBHE has deferred some of the metric settings and accountability development to an implementation phase, and we are asking very loudly and proudly for more representation and a larger voice in that phase. The other thing I would say is, in their conversations with the IBHE, the four-year presidents and chancellors have said, if you’re willing to blow up the system and change the assumptions about which institutions can offer which degrees, you should look at allowing four-year universities to offer associates of arts degrees after 60 credit hours or 70 credit hours, whatever it is, to our students, because right now a student who starts here and has to leave doesn’t have a credential. They can’t reverse transfer. All the transfer pathways are very transactionally complex. And if we could encourage all of our students who had to leave, step out, with giving them something to come back. To be honest, I think the conversation around that started as a political kind of shot across the bow and balance in defense of. But the idea has actually picked up some steam with people. And it addresses more than an early childhood shortage. It addresses debt without degree for a large number of students who don’t have privilege going into the system. Just wanted to make you aware that that conversation was late to the planning process, but it is ongoing.

K. Thu: Thank you, Lisa. So, I will echo my charge to Faculty Senate, which was, let’s make NIU the loudest voice in commenting on the IBHE’s strategic plan. We all recognize we don’t have all the time to read through the plan and to digest it, to critically analyze it. But we have President Freeman and Simón helping us along the way. The talking points and the ideas that Simón and Lisa have shared help us with putting together just the briefest of comments that you can put in as part of the planned comments. I believe somebody is going to put the connections in the chat box. So, I’m going to challenge the University Council, as well. Let’s have UC be one of the loudest voices across the state in providing comment and impetus for the direction of higher education. One of the things that I took away from reading the report was the lack of attention to the role of tenure-track faculty. There was absolutely nothing in there about the vital role of tenure-track faculty, particularly in four-year institutions, doctoral granting institutions where research and education go
hand in hand, and research leads to innovation and economic growth. So, that’s going to be part of my comments should I be given the opportunity tomorrow to voice them in the town hall.

So, thanks to both of you for those unscripted or uncharted comments.

VII. ITEMS FOR UNIVERSITY COUNCIL CONSIDERATION

A. Recognition of University Council members who have completed their service

K. Thu: So, on to item A under Roman numeral VII, Recognition of University Council members who have completed their service. We have a tradition when we’re in person of having the University Council members that are leaving to stand up. Given this medium, maybe we can have those that are completing their service on University Council, open your videos, open your chat and waive or thumbs-up. Or maybe you say adieu in the chat box. I’m not sure that I can see everyone on my screen. But I want to say a heartfelt thanks to all of you that have served on University Council. Though it has changed over the years, changed this past year, and as I’ve said many times before, shared governance is only as good as the people that get involved with it. So, we appreciate your service, and we hope that you remain involved at some level in some way. So, thank you very much for all you’ve done.

B. Budget report

Provost Beth Ingram
CFO Sarah Chinniah

K. Thu: That brings us to item B under Roman numeral VII, budget report. As you may remember, we had a budget report by President Freeman, Provost and CFO last March. And they provided an important conceptual framework for how the budgeting is being done. And I think that there were questions that were raised after that presentation, and then there were some – I would characterize as miscommunication in certain ways – since that meeting. And so, I wanted to give Provost Ingram and CFO Chinniah an opportunity to comment on the email that they sent out explaining the budgeting process in terms of budgets for colleges, transparency of budgeting and the role of centralization budgeting vs. local-level decisions. So, with that backdrop, Beth and Sarah, do you want to walk us through the email that you sent and perhaps comment around the edges and then allow for questions?

B. Ingram: Sure. We didn’t plan a presentation of any sort. We really wanted to take this opportunity to give you one last update before everybody is trying to grade exams and get ready for the summer and plan, hopefully, some getaways. We know this is a busy time of the year for everybody. Since we last met, the president’s budget roundtable has met, and we’ve had some lively discussions about the budget, communication strategies and process. The roundtable will continue to meet this summer. Due to the hard work of everyone on campus, we see some good news on the third quarter budget numbers that Sarah could get into a bit, and we discussed that in the email. That report allowed us in Academic Affairs to provide budget numbers to the colleges and other units, which happened last week. We started with the Academic Affairs units to support fall planning. And the report will allow us to provide budget numbers to other units over the next week or so. So, planning information and budget numbers. That’s sort of where we are. Sarah, did you want to add anything to that few comments?
S. Chinniah: I would just add to Provost Ingram’s point that really our strategy all year has been, actually even going back to March of last year when we were first responding to the impacts of COVID and what it means, is to make decisions when we had reliable information. And I think we’ve all been tested this year in that we are working to get reliable information often up until a point that is past the schedule that we’re typically used to. I think in this case, we would have liked to have budget numbers out before December, but in some ways there was some good news in that we waited until the third quarter numbers were available. Again, to emphasize what Provost Ingram said, we are tracking better this year because people have really looked at how to limit activity to time-sensitive, mission-critical. We were helped by federal funds to offset some of our losses. And really with that extra capacity, we have some support to help us going into next year. So, really want to thank everyone for their patience as we work to get the number available and also give us some time to make sure that we were making decisions that would set us up appropriately, both for the end of this year and going into next year.

B. Ingram: I would say that, even in a non-pandemic year, budget conversations are ongoing and lively and extend, basically, through the entire year. Typically, we would have had a set of public discussions and written updates over a period of time, and the leadership team in Academic Affairs would begin to plan based on likely and possible scenarios in anticipation of final decisions about budget allocations. I’m really sorry that there were some misconceptions that occurred about the fiscal ’22 budget earlier this month. We were scenario planning in advance of decisions that could not be made comfortably in advance of the third quarter numbers that we now have. And I was not as clear with the Academic Affairs team about when final decisions would be made and subsequent action should be taken. And for that, I’m really sorry. And I’ve learned the value and importance of affirming clear and consistent communication. And that’s what we’re working on going forward.

K. Thu: Thank you, Beth. And thank you, Sarah. Are there any comments or questions from anybody about the budget, the budget process, the budget numbers? Any hands going up? Or, are you ready for the academic year to be over.

S. Chinniah: I think everyone misses the PowerPoint, Kendall.

B. Ingram: Exactly, the pie charts.

S. Chinniah: Exactly.

K. Thu: Simón, I see your hand.

S. Weffer: Well, since it’s my last meeting, I’ll take as much time as I can.

K. Thu: You always do, whether it’s the last meeting or not.

S. Weffer: Well, that’s true, that’s true. I’m not shy, that’s for sure. I guess the question was about the timing of some of those initial discussions, because it felt like it hit right before we went live with offering students the course selections for fall. And then the very fast domino effect of having to pull back lots of courses and course sections based on some of those budgetary numbers. And so there are two things there. Obviously, that’s people’s jobs that we’re talking about, especially with non-tenure track instructors being put into limbo. But the other is an equity concern that I have is that my concern is especially classes like say COMS 100 or the large – I don’t remember what the cite class number is that is one of the larger gen eds. The students that tend to be impacted if we’re
going to withdraw all those sections last minute are the students that tend to register late. And those are first gen students, our socio-economically more disadvantaged students, BIPOC students since we know that they tend to register later. And so I was just wondering how moving forward we can ensure we don’t have those sort of shocks that then have unintended equity consequences for our students and staffing.

F. Bryan [via chat]: Simón, thank you for bringing up the issues with COMS 100.

K. Thu: Beth or Sarah? Maybe, Beth, this is a question mostly for you I would guess.

B. Ingram: Yes. In Academic Affairs, we do budget planning all year round. We’ll start talking about budgets this summer just because our planning in year around. The deans and I have been scenario planning specifically for fiscal ’22 since January. And, as I said, I’m really sorry that there was a miscommunication that caused that kind of shock. We strive for transparency and gradual decision making as opposed to sudden decision making. And I apologize that that happened this year. It was a miscommunication from me to Academic Affairs that caused that, and I’m sorry it happened.

S. Chinniah: I would just add that going forward, more from a university-wide perspective, our normal calendar was impacted. It’s not an excuse. This was an unusual time. I think we’ve also made a very public commitment to start to think about and plan and work toward multi-year planning beginning in the summer. With that will come a regular calendar where, with consultation, with president’s budget round table, UC, other forums, we’ll start to get information on what are the appropriate timelines where decisions need to be made, publish those timelines so that there’s a shared sense across campus of when that information will be available. So, I think that, as we work into more of a multi-year planning model as we respond to conversations and comments made in other forums, really asking us to think about how information is published in one location that is easily accessible by members of the campus, we also want to put that information out there so people know what to expect. And if we need to review timelines because perhaps they change or we find a better way to communicate when information is needed to inform decisions at different levels, that we have that information out there and we’re allowing the right kind of discussion and review in support of it.

S. Weffer: That makes total sense. It feels like we just haven’t gotten on to the right cadence yet thinking about moving to multi-year budgeting process. And unfortunately, the first year we were trying to phase that, we won the pandemic bingo, right? And so, my hope is, and I’m sure that it’ll happen, that as this becomes our standard practice, we won’t have these interruptions in cadence.

K. Thu: Well, thank you, Beth. And thank you, Sarah. I want to say that I’ve had multiple conversations with the provost, with President Freeman and Sarah about this, because I was concerned. And after my last conversation with Beth Ingram, I said, okay, now I’m satisfied with my understanding of what happened and how it happened. And I want to say there is nothing nefarious going on here. Even though there may be some missteps, wherever they have occurred, they were not intentional. It’s not like previous administrations, who will remain nameless, where there was a sense of distrust or mistrust of not knowing what’s going on. That’s not the case here, and I want to assure UC members that that has not been my experience. And when Beth asked me at the end of our last meeting, are you sure you’re okay with it, I said, yes, absolutely, I’m okay with it. So, I appreciate the candidness and, hopefully, as Simón has pointed out, we can make sure the process is clear going forward. I will also mention that Kurt Thurmaier sent to President Freeman a
letter offering to help what the president and the leadership is already doing, which is moving toward a more open and transparent and clear budget going forward and ways to do that. And so, I know that President Freeman appreciated Kurt’s letter. I appreciated his willingness to reach out and look for models in Illinois, award-winning models of budgeting that we can look to. And I think that that’s the direction that we’re going to go, just building upon the successes already. There are going to be stumbles in the future, there’s no question about it. But those will be, at least in my experience in shared governance with this administration, they will be honest mistakes and not attempts to pull one over on anybody in shared governance.

**L. Freeman:** Kendall, can I say one more thing?

**K. Thu:** Sure.

**L. Freeman:** First, I just want to affirm that we are, indeed, committed to transparency of budget information, of budget process and to a predictable calendar. And I really appreciate the fact that leadership holds itself accountable. When we screw up, we own it, and we hope that it leads to a fact that we don’t do that again. But I want to point out that, in addition to the pandemic sweepstakes that we won in Simón’s word, our small and mighty team in Finance has been winning, actually, another sweepstakes. And Sarah didn’t bring it up, but every single person in her shop has been working way, way over time for the past three or four months to help us refinance the debt associated with the public/private partnership that supports New Hall and Northern View Apartments. And yesterday we actually won the sweepstakes. So, all the time that it took away from getting other things done, I think was worth it. We went into a bond sale yesterday morning with 16 times the interest that the sale could support. We woke up yesterday morning with $122 million in debt at 6.9 percent increase. And by the end of the day yesterday, we had $99 million in debt at 2.7 percent increase. So, this bond refinance saved the university $77 million. And we were able to frontend some of that savings to really help us get off on the right foot with multi-year planning. You may remember last year we did a bond refinance that saved us about $50 million. So, Sarah and her team – and also all of you, because the deciding factor in making our bonds attractive was our enrollment increases and our commitment to equity. And so, everyone here played a role in helping this happen. But Sarah and her team brought us across the finish line exceeding all expectations. And I just want you guys to know that sometimes when you were getting things a little late, it was because they were burning the midnight oil on this project. And fortunately, it’s not something we’ll have to do again. So, kudos to the team, and kudos to everyone in the community who made our narrative strong through their commitment to our students to equity and to keeping our enrollment up.

**S. Weffer** [via chat]: Every win is important! So glad to hear!

**D. Douglass** [via chat]: Wow!

**K. Thurmaier** [via chat]: Excellent work! Congratulations.

**J. Monteiro** [via chat]: [Northern Illinois University Borrows After Enrollment Gains – BNN Bloomberg](https://www.bnnbloomberg.ca/)

**N. Johnson** [via chat]: Awesome!

**S. Weffer** [via chat]: Congratulations to our financial team!
S. Chinniah [via chat]: It’s a big win for the university!

K. Thu: Kudos to Sarah. Thank you, Sarah, and your team. That’s just terrific work. I don’t know if we can share the article that came out in institutional communication this morning in the chat room, if anybody can do that.

J. Monteiro: I just posted it.

K. Thu: Thank you. Bond refinancing is not exactly a glitzy thing on the university’s radar, but it’s extremely important. And to the extent I understand it, what a great achievement. And it’s worth celebrating this afternoon at Fatty’s even if we didn’t have the last meeting of UC. Thanks, Sarah.

S. Chinniah: It really is a reflection of the university to have Bloomberg News reach out. And not so much about the financial aspect, but to really celebrate in this climate an institution who is making enrollment gains, is committed to equity, diversity and inclusion. Jay, thank you for sharing the article. That’s the focus of the article. It’s really the mission of the university. It’s the value that we bring. It’s the generations that we will impact because of the work that we at this institution do. So, this is just a win for the institution.

K. Thu: And also, Sarah, the folks that stepped up to refinance. Do you want to say something about the profile of those investors?

S. Chinniah: Oh, Kendall, you’re putting me on the spot. So, I’ll just say that we had about $100 million out there. We had orders at $1.6 billion. And they give you a dashboard; you can watch the orders come in. And to see places like Wells Fargo and to see places like T. Rowe Price and Vanguard, these are big names. We also diversified our investor pool, which again is not very glamorous, but when you look at those who typically bid on universities, we saw some new investors, which helped the university going forward. And I would be remiss if I didn’t also say that a large part of the interest was just due to how the governor and his administration is prioritizing higher ed. Because we are so tightly linked to the state of Illinois. As everyone knows, our appropriations are on time. We have access to stable and reliable funding. They’re honoring their commitment. That carries a lot of weight. So, a lot of good news for sure.

K. Thu: Thank you, Sarah. And again, congratulations. We’ll tip one for you and your team tonight.

S. Chinniah: We all appreciate it, thank you.

K. Thu: Okay, thank you.

VIII. NEW BUSINESS

A. Student Grievance Annual Report per NIU Bylaws, Article 6.6 – Kendall Thu

Two student grievances were submitted during the 2020-21 academic year. In each case, a Student Grievance Committee concluded its review process.

K. Thu: Let’s move on to new business. There are three items under Roman numeral VIII. The first
one is the annual student grievance report that I’m required to provide under Article 6. The Faculty Senate president, the University Council chair is required to provide a report. I also oversee the two grievances that we had this year. I guess oversee is not quite the right word. Facilitated two student grievances under Article 6. Those two student grievances were concluded, well I won’t say successfully, but they were concluded with due process, is I guess the best way to talk about it. I think even equally importantly with that is that my experience, along with the other folks that are involved in the student grievance process, we came to the conclusion, an ongoing conclusion that we needed to revise Article 6. It’s in dire need of updating. And so myself and Provost Ingram and several others have been in conversations about how to do that. I kept notes during the course of those two grievances about what some of the challenges are. And this is not to say that the way that Article 6 was set up was a bad idea in the first place. I know that Therese and her team put in a lot of effort, but there are just points where we need to improve it based upon experience. And now we have a group that’s working on that, and it will be another piece of shared governance that gets better. Any questions about the student grievance process? I want to thank Lindsay Hatzis in her office and then Sarah Klaper for her work in helping to revise the bylaws. Again, it’s not glamorous work, but it needs to be done.

B. Proposed amendment to NIU Bylaws, Article 1.2, Terms of Office
FIRST READING
Holly Nicholson, Operating Staff Council representative to UC

K. Thu: With that, we’ll go on to item B, proposed amendment to NIU Bylaws, Article 1.2, Terms of Office, which is on page 6. And this is a first reading, and once Pat can scroll down to page 6, I’m going to turn it over to Holly. This is a fairly simple, straightforward change. And as far as I’m concerned, Operating Staff Council gets to decide what the length of their term is for their membership in shared governance. So, Holly, are you there?

H. Nicholson: I am, thank you. Hopefully, this is just a simple update. Historically, our representatives have served for just one year, although many of us do consecutive terms. But we would like to continue that practice, because we feel it allows more opportunity for interested staff to serve on UC. It just opens up the opportunities that staff at large and our council members have to be involved in the larger shared governance.

K. Thu: This is a first reading. There’s no voting. If there are any comments or questions? This will be brought back to UC the first meeting in the fall for a vote. And it’s just part of an ongoing effort to make sure we have updates to our bylaws. All right, thanks, Holly.

C. Proposed amendment to NIU Bylaws
Creation of new Article 12, Supportive Professional Staff Personnel Advisor and Operating Staff Personnel Advisor
FIRST READING
Holly Nicholson, Operating Staff Council representative to UC

K. Thu: That brings us to item C, proposed amendment to NIU Bylaws, creation of a new Article 12, Supportive Professional Staff Personnel Advisor and Operating Staff Personnel Advisor, which are on pages 7 and 9. And Pat is already there. And so once again, I’m going to turn it back to Holly to walk us through this, which is again a first reading. And I think maybe I may repeat a comment that I already provided to you in person; I mean not in person, but my personal email message.
**H. Nicholson:** Thank you. I’ll give a little more background about this one. A report delivered by the OSC Ad Hoc Committee on Employee Morale back in 2015 called out the gap in personnel advisor representation for operating staff or civil service employees, which consists of currently over 1500 people. With the cooperation of the OSC of the University Council and then executive vice president and provost, and now President Lisa Freeman, we created a pilot operating staff personnel advisor or OSPA position in 2016. And John Hulseberg was elected to the position, and he continues to serve doing just an excellent job. Because of the success of that OSPA position and the fact that the faculty and SPS personnel advisor serves two very different audiences, the SPS Council chose to develop a pilot program for an SPS-only advisor. Jeannie Meier was selected for that role, and she has also done exemplary work. She has been busy at a proportional level to the OSPA.

While staff do have confidential resources on campus including the ombudsperson, EAP and some unions always do excellent work, the personnel advisor positions are unique, because they can advocate for employees. Each of these resources I had mentioned has a unique purpose and function, giving staff the ability to choose what’s best for their situation. The duties of the OSPA and SPSPA have been doing include advising about personnel policies and procedures at NIU and also the State Universities Civil Service System, helping staff members who are not covered by a collective bargaining agreement, which is all of SPS and still a considerable bit of civil service, with their personnel or employment concerns, guiding employees, who are in a union, to resources within their collective bargaining unit, accompanying employees to meetings when requested and also observing the personnel process and making suggestions for improvement.

I have access to more information about the OSPA than the SPSPA – those acronyms are a little bit of a mouthful. I’ll use the OSPA position as an example of the success of the two programs. The OSPA was utilized by employees right away as soon as it was started. And John has remained extremely busy ever since. For instance, since July of 2020, ten months into FY21, John has met with 21 individual employees and also communicated with them by email, text and/or phone calls. And that doesn’t even include simple referrals or informal questions. Seventeen of the employees required two meetings or more. And one individual met with John on nine occasions in addition to the emails, phone calls and texts. Seven of the 21 cases are closed, and 14 still have pending outcomes. John has also set up or attended meetings and phone calls on behalf of employees with university leadership, and he does this all with only ten percent of release time from his normal full-time job as a painter on campus. And I know that Jeannie has a similar story; I just apologize for not having access to her data.

After six years in pilot status, the staff representatives of University Council feel that there’s enough data to support the need for these roles, and we ask that you consider this addition to the UC [NIU] Bylaws to codify them. The faculty personnel advisor will remain in the Faculty Senate Bylaws, which will be amended when the senate reconvenes in the fall. And the respective staff councils will also manage our legislative documents that will address additional qualifications, conditions of employment and method of selection.

Does anyone have any questions?

**K. Thu:** I wonder, Holly, whether since this also involves or references the SPS advisor, whether Cathy wants to say anything. Cathy, do you have anything that you want to add to this conversation as part of the first reading?
C. Doederlein: I appreciate that, but I don’t really have much to add. I almost always concur with what Holly says, and she captured it very eloquently and very well. Numbers-wise in terms of Jeannie’s participation – sorry that we don’t have the formal data, but as Holly mentioned – it is proportionately comparable to what John has been doing within operating staff as far as the volume of people she’s assisting. Something that she also noted in terms of why we want to allow the personnel advisor to have a longer term is that oftentimes issues can carry over from one year to the next, and so having that consistency has been helpful as well. But, just really appreciate the opportunity to bring this forward. I think it’s really important. We’ve been advocating for it behind the scenes for a while and really appreciate the senior leadership and President Freeman supporting the roles as pilots, but it’s time to let them grow a bit more from there, hopefully.

H. Nicholson: There are a lot of thanks that I would like to give, but again, I’m kind of afraid of leaving someone out. So, I appreciate everyone who’s worked with us on this. Also want to note that a lot of training does go into those positions, which is another reason why we felt the terms should be three years. They train with – oh, I hope I don’t miss anything on this list – HR, General Counsel, the Ombudsperson, EAP and etc. I think it’s all in the bylaw the places that they train.

K. Thu: Are there any comments or questions about this? My comment, and I know President Freeman and I had a very brief conversation about this when I shared it with her, is that you might think about whether the section 12.2 in its entirety, conditions of employment, really belongs in the bylaws, or whether that could be separated out. We don’t generally put conditions of employment in our bylaws. But that’s something I will pass along to the next UC chair, co-chair, next Faculty Senate president. It will be part of my list that I can share with the next president. Unless there are other comments?

H. Nicholson: Regarding the conditions of employment, I think one reason why we have this in here is there have been a lot of discussions about compensation and just an amazing willingness of the faculty personnel advisor to reevaluate the compensation of that position. So, to have somewhere it notes that the compensation should be comparable is important, I believe, and also just establishing the availability of secretarial assistance and appointment links. Perhaps if we renamed the bylaw, I don’t know if that would help. There are some things in here, which we could probably move to our local legislative documents.

K. Thu: What I see as a model for this is the language that we have for the Faculty Senate president is very short, but it, I think, captures what it is you’re trying to do here [NIU Bylaws, Article 3.6 and FS Bylaws, Article 6.4]. I’m not suggesting you have to get rid of everything, but it’s something you might want to work with Peter to shorten and see what’s absolutely necessary. I understand the reasoning to keep it in the bylaws, because you want it institutionalized. But take a look at the language in the bylaws for the Faculty Senate president, and I think Pat can probably share that with you. It’s something to maybe benchmark this on.

H. Nicholson: Cathy, maybe you could speak to this. Was this based on the faculty personnel advisor bylaw?

C. Doederlein: Yes, the way the faculty and SPS personnel advisor is how it’s written currently is written. It does have very detailed specifics about compensation. I know when we were working through the different draft stages of this, the desire was to avoid listing an exact dollar amount, because that has definitely boxed the university in unfairly in terms of what our budget can sustain. But I know that it was still urged to at least have some reference of compensation, because certainly
the lack of compensation would likely lead to fewer people being interested in participating, and it really is worthy of compensation in terms of the time and work that goes into it, and the potential impacts or concerns that grievances that somebody might raise could cost the university. I think that was the desire to still have some mention of compensation, as well as equity across the compensation is probably the key point of conditions of employment that I think we were just trying to ensure were included.

**H. Nicholson:** Did you use the faculty and SPS personnel advisor bylaw [FS Bylaws, Article 14] as a template for this document in terms of length and specificity?

**C. Doederlein:** Yes, I think we did expand it a fair amount. If you were to look at them side by side, with strike through and all that kind of stuff, there is definitely some additional language here as compared to that bylaw. But it was in a goal to try to codify as much as possible, but I get that there is sort of policy vs. procedure and making sure that the two aren’t blurred together. So, I can see that comment. But, no, I know that was part of the reasoning for that being extensive. But definitely, the item was built off of the original faculty and SPS personnel advisor bylaw.

**K. Thu:** I encourage you to have a conversation along these lines going forward. My comment was about the language that we use for the Faculty Senate president and their compensation, which is very brief. But anyway, I think I’m supportive of this suggested overall change. I think President Freeman indicated her willingness to support it. It’s just a matter of having a conversation where perhaps it can be a little more parsimonious in 12.2, while maintaining the language that clarifies institutional responsibility.

**L. Freeman:** I think we don’t have to necessarily delete stuff and put it nowhere. I think we could have a personnel advisor compensation policy in the Policy Library in a forum that would be referenced here and then that would be in a place where, if we needed to change things, it would just be easier to change than a bylaw change. But it would be transparent, and it would be something that was mutually agreed upon. We can figure that out before it comes back.

**K. Thu:** Absolutely. Absolutely. I think the general point is that we’re all in support of the overarching effort here. And thank you, Holly, and your team, and Cathy, for working on this. Other questions or comments about the proposal? If not, it will come back for a second reading in the fall as well, so you’re going to be on stage again, maybe on the real stage in the fall, Holly.

**L. Saborío** [via chat]: And the language for the IBHE-FAC faculty rep might be helpful [NIU Bylaws, Article 8.5].

**N. Johnson** [via chat]: Thanks, Holly, for bringing this forward.

**H. Nicholson:** Looking forward to it. Thank you.

**IX. UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

**K. Thu:** Let’s move on to item IX, unfinished business, I wanted to say a few things here, but I think I’ll wait until after the reports from council, boards and standing committees.
X. REPORTS FROM COUNCILS, BOARDS AND STANDING COMMITTEES

A. Faculty Advisory Council to the IBHE – Linda Saborío – report

K. Thu: Let’s go ahead and move into those, which I think will be fairly brief, and then there are a few things that I want to say at the end. Linda, do we have a report from the Faculty Advisory Council to IBHE?

L. Saborío: Hello. We are competing with some serious – my husband’s in the back, and he has way too much energy, and he’s redoing [inaudible]. If you hear a really loud banging noise, Pat knows what I’m talking about. Wow, I don’t know what he’s doing back there. I’m afraid to walk back there and take a look, honestly, I don’t know.

The FAC met on April 16. Our legislative liaison discussed a few bills being proposed by legislators. He’s going to keep us informed of any changes to these bills. There was like a College Promise Grant bill that looked interesting to him and also like HB3950. If you want anymore information, there was a long list he provided us, I’d be more than happy to share that with you.

The liaison mentioned that the next IBHE board meeting is scheduled for June 8, and, as you all know, a draft of the strategic plan was shared with presidents of higher education and other stakeholders. And it’s available for public comment. I am preparing so that Laurie knows she won’t be the only one commenting, and Kendall as well, I’ve been trying to prepare my comments. It’s a rough week for faculty as you all know, finals week. I’m hoping to have my comments prepared for tomorrow’s meeting. I just registered for the meeting.

Our FAC rep on the Strategic Plan Committee expressed similar concerns that were shared with Faculty Senate by Simón last week and also we discussed the research component in the plan, or lack of a significant research component, actually, and the idea of including the state’s role in supporting research and artistry and not just at the federal level. In terms of metrics, how do we measure research and engagement. Much more in that conversation.

Marie Donovan – I don’t know if you’ve heard of her, she’s a rep for us from DePaul University – shared her thoughts on the applied B.A. degree in early childhood education at community colleges including the need for greater collaboration between the two-year and four-year institutions, clear guidelines on competency-based measures and the importance of providing alternative methods of [inaudible] adult and remote learners. She has been working, you have no idea how much she’s been advocating against this move, this position, right?

And then John Atkinson, the chair of the IBHE, joined our group – good timing, John. We had a lot of questions for him about the strategic plan, dual credit, early college, alternatives, etc. And once the notes come out from our secretary on the FAC, I would more than happy to share those with you if you’re interested in getting a better idea of what we talked about with John.

And then we had an invited guest, Ray Schroeder, who presented on being online in COVID times. And I have his website that I can share with you if you’re interested in taking a look at what his presentation entailed. With that, I’ll open this up to any questions.

P. Erickson [via chat]: I see new cabinets in the future of Linda’s kitchen!
R. Brinkmann [via chat]: I love those random moments!

K. Thu: Questions either for Linda or her husband?

L. Saborío: I don’t know what he’s doing. I’m going on mute.

K. Thu: Well, thank you again, Linda, for all your work on the FAC. And again, congratulations on being elected vice chair of the group. That reflects well on the work that you’ve done thus far, and I know you’ve said that you don’t want to be chair in the future, but maybe that could be the future.

L. Saborío: I appreciate that, thank you, but no, it’s a lot of responsibility being the chair of this group.

K. Thu: Any questions or comments for Linda? Thanks, Linda.

B. University Advisory Committee to the Board of Trustees – report
   Natasha Johnson, Catherine Doederlein, Kendall Thu
   Katy Jaekel, Sarah Marsh, Greg Beyer

K. Thu: Next we have UAC to the Board of Trustees. There’s nothing really to report. I can say that, with respect to the BOT, after the University Council approved the proposed constitutional amendment to change the definition of faculty, it went to a faculty referendum. I don’t have the numbers in front of me. Pat has them. But the referendum on the proposed change to the faculty definition passed overwhelmingly. Now it needs approval from the Board of Trustees since it is a proposed change to the constitution. And that is slated for the June BOT meeting, which will be my final BOT meeting to attend, as well. Thanks, everybody, that was involved in crafting the faculty definition change. And I’m going to thank Peter now, but I’m going to come back to Peter later after we’re done with the rest of the reports and thank him for the work on that, as well as other matters.

C. Rules, Governance and Elections Committee – no report
   Therese Arado, Chair

K. Thu: With that, Therese, we do not have any report from Rules, Governance and Elections.

D. Student Government Association – report
   Antonio Johnson, President
   Bradley Beyer, Speaker of the Senate

K. Thu: Student Government Association, Antonio and/or Brad, are either or both of you here?

A. Johnson: Yes, I am here.

K. Thu: Hi Antonio. It’s good to have you.

A. Johnson: Thank you, Kendall. Once again, congratulations, and I’m sure you will be missed.

K. Thu: I’ll miss you, Antonio.
A. Johnson: Thank you. It’s been an honor to work with you all this year. At the beginning of the year, I just did not see how we would make it through, but through adversity, we see the light at the end of the tunnel. And I’m proud of all the work that we accomplished this year as a university. Every time I talk to any of my friends at other universities, I always talk so highly of NIU. I’m not sure if Devlin is here or not. But, Devlin, if you are here, I would love to introduce you.

K. Thu: Maybe Devlin or Dallas.

A. Johnson: I don’t think Devlin is here, but Devlin Collins, he filled in for me a few times this year. He is the SGA president-elect. He’ll take office June 1, and I’ll be turning everything over to him within the next upcoming weeks. Once again, thank you all and enjoy your summer.

K. Thu: Thank you so much for your service, Antonio. You and Brad have done a wonderful job this year through the most trying of circumstances and appreciate all you’ve given to the university. And I hope you certainly earned your degree and earned your future going forward. So, it’s been a pleasure working with you.

A. Johnson: Thank you, Kendall.

J. Olson [via chat]: Thank you, Antonio.

L. Freeman [via chat]: Congratulations on your graduation and thank you for your service!

K. Thu: Brad, are you with us?

B. Beyer: Yes. One of the things that I’ve talked a lot about this year are campus partnerships. And when I talked about NIU externally to non-university people, particularly incoming students, one of the things that I say that I’ve been pleasantly surprised about with NIU is the real commitment, the genuine commitment that I’ve seen to wanting to include student voices at the decision-making table, albeit this year a virtual table. I have to say I have a newfound respect for shared governance and definitely the shared governance reforms that we did last spring definitely guided me and were motivation and an inspiration for taking a page out of that book and implementing that in the Student Senate for all of us going forward in terms of how student voices are represented in the SGA. Kind of all throughout the, I really have a lot of appreciation for shared governance and it’s been an honor. It’s been really good to get to know everyone and to work with you all, especially this year through some pretty trying and challenging circumstances. I definitely had some pretty rough days, but I had a lot of great days too. I want to say thank you to everyone, and it’s just been an honor to get to know all of you and to have gotten to work with you these past 12 months in my role as the speaker. Thank you all again. I’ll definitely be an active alum. With that, I want to say thank you all and, for the last time, I want to sign off but also give the incoming speaker-elect, Dallas, who I know you all have met, just some words. So, thank you all again, and, Dallas, do you want to take it over?

V. Edghill-Walden [via chat]: Congrats to both of you! Job well done.

D. Dallas: Sure. I was not expecting to say anything today, so this is going to be off the dome a little bit. Thank you, Brad. And thank you for your leadership and expertise. You’ve been an excellent role model to me as a speaker, and I hope to fill your shoes next year. I like that you mentioned the new senate model. I wanted to just plug that we’re coming into the new year with 21
senators out of 30, which is a very good turnout. I think that the new senate model is going to be extremely effective in the coming years, and I hope that it’s one that continues on.

On April 18, our final meeting, we also passed the project that I’ve been working on, which is a code of conduct for members of SGA. That’s following some controversy earlier this year if you all recall. I can talk more about that maybe later or not on this forum. But, yes, good news, things happening, things passing.

In terms of goals for next year, I really want to focus on just mirroring university goals, honestly. I love coming to these meetings, because I see that my goals and the senate’s goals and the university’s are all pretty much in alignment. I personally am really interested in engagement especially, so, if anybody wants to talk to me about that, I would love to hear it. I think we’re going to see a surge in students wanting to get involved, because freshmen and sophomores are both going to be new to campus and looking for things to do. And I hope that SGA can be kind of a launch pad for that.

In addition to that, we’re thinking of ways to frame a unifying goal for every branch of the SGA for the next session. And currently, the working idea is sticking with anti-racism and diversity, equity and inclusion. And again, that’s something that mirrors university goals and changing policy. So, I think the way that our structures are set up right now is going to be very productive and helpful for all of us achieving our goals.

Thank you again, Brad, for your expertise. You and I are going to have our meetings; we’ll work on all that transition stuff once finals are over. It’s been a crazy week. And I’m very excited to work with all of you in the coming year. And thank you, Kendall, for your work as well.

L. Saborío [via chat]: Welcome Dallas!

K. Thu: Well, thank you, Dallas. And welcome to you and welcome to Devlin. And once again, thank you to Antonio and Brad for all you’ve done. We have listened to student voices. Antonio and Brad will remember a meeting that we had earlier this year. It was Brad and Antonio, me and the provost. And we were discussing what the spring calendar should look like, fully expecting that we would never satisfy everybody. But I remember both Brad and Antonio throwing out possible dates for three-day weekends. And so we threw dates out, and Antonio suddenly said, well, if we pick that Friday for a day off, that’s the Friday right before Valentine’s Day. And nobody had thought about that before. So, we picked that weekend. So, thank you all for your service in student government leadership, and I’m sure that shared governance will continue to listen to student voices. So, thank you.

E. Operating Staff Council – Natasha Johnson, President – report

K. Thu: With that, Natasha, any report from the Operating Staff Council?

N. Johnson: Yes, the Operating Staff Council is working on getting some bylaws together, solidifying some items, using this time to really get everything straight forward, which is why Holly was bringing forth items today. And then we’ll be looking forward to hearing from Dr. Chris McCord on the efficiencies from the university to find out where we are with that.
And then we have gotten solidified the foundation account for the Civil Service Emergency Fund. So, I’m pretty sure everybody will be getting an email pretty soon hitting you up for some funds to help out with all of our workers. And we appreciate you doing that in advance.

Last but not least, we are just trying to make sure that we get everything done with the elections as that’s up right now. And they’ll be closing, I want to say, about ten days, two weeks.

So, that’s pretty much it. I just wanted to say thank you to you, Kendall, and also to Cathy. This has been an amazing year. I never thought I’d be in so many meetings, and I feel like we were in so many meetings together. At one point, I was like, oh, somebody can speak on my behalf or I can speak on their behalf, because we hear the same things over and over. And it’s been a really good ride, and it’s really great to see so many people passionate about pushing the university forward. And it makes it worth getting up everyday and working those extra hours to get the job done. Thank you.

K. Thu: Thank you, Natasha. And thank you for all the work. It’s a broken record when we see each other in these virtual rooms, we sort of recognize how much work each of us is putting in and how much we’ve worked together over this past year and beyond. So, thanks, Natasha.

H. Nicholson [via chat]: Thanks for your work, Natasha!

F. Supportive Professional Staff Council – Catherine Doederlein, President – report

K. Thu: And that brings us to SPS Council. Cathy, I guess maybe this is your last hurrah as SPS Council president. So, we want to give you a little extra time to offer your report and your reflections.

C. Doederlein: Sure, thank you. I just wanted to thank the university for the efforts put together to have an awards ceremony for SPS and Operating Staff, which happened in the intervening time between now and our last University Council meeting. Obviously, I’m sure we’d all love to be in person, but without being in person, I think it was still a very special event, and we were able to recognize the achievements and work of a lot of great staff members. So, thank you for that.

Our election process – we just closed nominations. So, it’s now too late for anybody to be nominated, but next week, I believe, is when we’ll reopen the election process. And so, if you know any SPS, please encourage them to be voting so that we can, hopefully, give really good numbers in terms of the election process and have our representatives added to the list.

I actually transitioned to civil service on March 1 and so, I am just sort of lingering a little bit. The council has been kind enough to let me stick around and try to make a transition process. Felicia Bohanon is our vice president and has now stepped into the president’s role and will do a phenomenal job. I am certain with that, the council is in good hands. And I kind of hope that my shift to civil service can be an example of the extent to which that doesn’t change my job or my worth in the university, as it doesn’t change anybody’s. Civil service and SPS are both vital components of our university mission and deliver on so many needs of the campus. And it really doesn’t matter whether that’s on the civil service side or the SPS side. Though I definitely won’t be SPS Council president again, and I’m kind of stepping away from shared governance for a little bit,
take a little break, I just definitely see the opportunity to make sure that we see all staff as equal and equally important to the mission. And I’ll do whatever I can when I’m maybe doing more in shared governance again in the future to try to help with that.

Thanks to Kendall. The work you’ve done this year and previous years to help support everybody, including staff, has been greatly appreciated. And I’ve also really enjoyed getting to work with and know Natasha better, as well. Thanks very much.

B. Beyer [via chat]: Cathy and Natasha are the best!

L. Freeman [via chat]: Cathy, you have left your mark and will be missed!

R. Brinkmann [via chat]: Congrats, Cathy!

H. Nicholson [via chat]: Welcome to civil service, Cathy! We’re lucky to have you. Thank you for your unfailing service to staff. It was an honor to serve with you. We’ll miss you.

F. Bryan [via chat]: Cathy, thank you for all that you have done for the university!

T. Borg [via chat]: Cathy, SPS Council sincerely appreciates the time and expertise you provided in leading us for many years. We will miss you on the council, but appreciate you will continue to be a colleague.

K. Thu: Thank you, Cathy. We appreciate everything you’ve done and continue to do. You really are the embodiment of NIU in so many ways. And the last meeting that Cathy and I had was at the leadership meeting. There’s usually three of us there, but it was just Cathy and me. And we got to catch up not only on NIU business, but more sort of personal business. And that was a lot of fun. We hadn’t had a chance to do that for quite a while. Thank you for all you do and all you’re going to do for sure going forward. Thank you.

XI. INFORMATION ITEMS

A. Policy Library – Comment on Proposed Policies (right-hand column on web page)
B. Minutes, Academic Planning Council
C. Minutes, Athletic Board
D. Minutes, Baccalaureate Council
E. Minutes, Board of Trustees
F. Minutes, Campus Security and Environmental Quality Committee
G. Minutes, Comm. on the Improvement of the Undergraduate Academic Experience
H. Minutes, General Education Committee
I. Minutes, Graduate Council
J. Minutes, Honors Committee
K. Minutes, Operating Staff Council
L. Minutes, Supportive Professional Staff Council
M. Minutes, University Assessment Panel
N. Minutes, University Benefits Committee
O. Minutes, Univ. Comm. on Advanced and Nonteaching Educator License Programs
P. Minutes, University Committee on Initial Educator Licensure
Q. UC 2021-22 dates: Sep 8, Oct 6, Nov 3, Dec 1, Feb 2, Mar 2, Apr 6, May 4
K. Thu: With that, as we begin to close out the last UC meeting, I just want to let you know – you already know this – that Peter Chomentowski was elected to Faculty Senate president at the April Faculty Senate meeting. Of course, that means that Peter will be the chair, the co-chair, of UC meetings. And Peter, are you with us? Do you want to say a few words? I’m not sure if you’re still with us or not, but I wanted to give you the opportunity.

P. Chomentowski: Yes, I’m here. I really appreciate the opportunity. I’m looking forward to working with everyone. And one of the big things is I’ve worked closely with Kendall the last two years. And so, working with him closely, I think there’s a lot of things that have yet to be finished. And that’s what I’m looking forward to doing this year, is continuing what Kendall started and kind of getting the things we’re doing to the end product for everyone and for all the faculty at NIU.

K. Thu: Thanks, Peter. I know you’re going to do a great job. And I’ve admired your work as the committee chair and your working on bylaw changes, including the faculty definition that you played a central role in. It’s not easy trying to revamp the definition of faculty for an entire campus. That means you have to [inaudible] a lot of people, including people who don’t agree with you. You have to talk it through, and that’s something that we certainly did. In part because of that, I know you’ll be a great Faculty Senate president and also co-leader of University Council. UC and FS are in good hands, thank you.

With that, I just want to say again to please join us at Fatty’s starting at 5:30 for complimentary snacks and drinks, thanks to President Freeman. No shared governance or university budget is being used to pay for this. So, I want to thank President Freeman for putting this together. And the idea that we actually get to see each other in person. I see some brighter skies, so I think maybe the rain will hold off, and I hope you all can join us.

P. Chomentowski [via chat]: I won’t be able to join you at Fatty’s since I am still in New Jersey. Thank you for the offer.

H. Nicholson [via chat]: I’m under the weather so I need to stay home, but I hope you all have a wonderful summer and stay well! Hope to see you next year!

K. Thu: And then finally, I just want to say thank you again to everybody. This has been a great ride. I’m not going to say anything more, because I’ll get too emotional, and we’ll have to cut it short. But I just wanted you to know how much I appreciated each and every one of you, and what a great opportunity it’s been for me. And if NIU is just a little bit better because of it, then it’s all worth it. So, thank you.

XII. ADJOURNMENT

K. Thu: So, with that, I will entertain a motion to adjourn the meeting.

T. Arado: So moved.

K. Thu: Of course, Therese. Do we have a second?

N. Johnson: Second.
K. Thu: Okay, if you would all open up your microphones and indicate you would like to adjourn the meeting by saying aye.

Members: Aye.

K. Thu: Thanks everybody. See you at Fatty’s.

Meeting adjourned at 4:22 p.m.