

## TRANSCRIPT

University Council  
Wednesday, April 6, 2022, 3 p.m.  
Altgeld Hall 315  
Northern Illinois University  
DeKalb, Illinois

**VOTING MEMBERS PRESENT:** Beyer, Collins, Conderman, Costello, Cripe, Elish-Piper, Freeman, Heckmann (for Chinniah), Hulseberg, Hunter (for Stange), Ingram, Kozumplik (for Teso-Warner), Martin, Monteiro, Nicholson, O’Grady (for Boughton), Olson, Osorio (for Garcia), Rogers, Scheibe, Timko, Vaughn, Weffer, Yates

**VOTING MEMBERS ABSENT:** Bohanon, Boughton, Burg, Chinniah, Garcia, Poyser, Stange, Teso-Warner

**OTHERS PRESENT:** Blazey, Bryan, Chomentowski, McEvoy, Saborío

### I. CALL TO ORDER

**L. Freeman:** ...that cycle of activity and craziness that comes at this time of year feels really good to be back to normal. The part that doesn’t feel really good is, I learned about 20 minutes ago that I needed to shoehorn in a time-sensitive meeting at 4 o’clock. So, at that time, I will be leaving University Council, turning my seat over to the executive vice president and provost, Beth Ingram, and turning my vote over to Vice President Jerry Blazey. But hopefully, that won’t deter us too much. I don’t have a lot of announcements, so if we move through the rest of the meeting quickly, I think we’ll get through most of it before I have to go.

### II. VERIFICATION OF QUORUM

**L. Freeman:** In that case, I’ve already gotten official verification of a quorum, that is correct, right, Pat?

**P. Erickson:** Yes, it is.

### III. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

**L. Freeman:** And so, may I have a motion to accept the agenda.

**B. Ingram:** So moved.

**W. Vaughn:** Second.

**L. Freeman:** Moved and seconded.

#### **IV. APPROVAL OF THE MARCH 2, 2022 MINUTES**

**L. Freeman:** And a motion approve the minutes of the March 2, 2022, meeting.

**W. Vaughn:** So moved.

**M. Timko:** Second.

**L. Freeman:** Thank you.

#### **V. PUBLIC COMMENT**

**L. Freeman:** Pat and Ferald, have we had any requests for public comment?

**P. Erickson:** I have no requests.

**L. Freeman:** Thank you.

#### **VI. NIU PRESIDENT LISA FREEMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

**L. Freeman:** In that case, we'll move to my announcements, which are going to be very short. It's crazy here. I just said that. It's also crazy in Springfield. And it's a little crazier in Springfield than normal, because the General Assembly is working hard to end the session this Friday, so that they can go back to their districts and campaign for the accelerated primary season. Matt Streb is down there with Katie Davison. Presidents and chancellors of both the public universities and the community colleges are in constant contact. And I can give you what I know at this moment in time.

A couple of the regulatory reform bills look like they may wait til veto session instead of going through right now. A bill that was brought forward to make testing for the civil service system more 21<sup>st</sup> century and more humane is on pause and will likely not be looked at again until veto session with some summer discussion. A very comprehensive procurement reform bill, which would make all of our lives easier and also make it easier for small businesses and diverse vendors to participate, may or may not go through in this session. I'd say, at this point, it's a coin toss.

But the good news is that we got a budget bill out of the House last night, and it's good for us. It has the five percent up for fiscal year 2022, and that's carried forward to fiscal year 2023. And in the current form, there wouldn't need to be a separate vote on the supplement for this fiscal year. So, there are a lot of steps to come, but the fact that this is very consistent with what we heard from the governor's office and came forward in such a clear fashion can only be seen as a positive. And with our continued advocacy, I'm fairly optimistic that we will have a budget and a budget that is relatively good for us before the end of this session.

## VII. ITEMS FOR UNIVERSITY COUNCIL CONSIDERATION

### A. [Strategic Enrollment Management 2.0](#)

Beth Ingram  
Executive Vice President and Provost

**L. Freeman:** So, with that, I'm going to move on to the item for University Council consideration under VII. I normally turn the gavel over to Pete at this point, but really, the Strategic Enrollment Management Plan is something that the administration, the senior leadership, is so proud of, that I wanted to be the one to introduce this item today. Vice President Jensen and the provost would normally co-present, but he is up in Rockford welcoming a new class of Rockford Promise students into the Huskie family, and so the provost will be carrying the presentation, I'm sure, quite ably today.

**B. Ingram:** Thank you. And thank you for giving me the time to talk about this really important initiative. And I do want to acknowledge that Vice President Sol Jensen wrote much of this and did many of the slides. And so, I'm sort of channeling him for pieces of this today. But he's doing important work for us up in Rockford. So, next slide, please.

Guided by our first SEM Plan and prior to the pandemic, NIU stabilized, and even increased, total enrollment. The positive impact is reflected in growing numbers of new and high-achieving students and positively trending first-year retention rates, total enrollment and reduction in equity gaps. Over the past five years, NIU's four- and six-year undergraduate graduation rates increased. The four-year graduation rate for freshmen increased by nearly nine percent, and the six-year rate increased by more than six percent. And that's really fantastic progress on numbers that are often very hard to move.

NIU developed and introduced new programs and strategies designed to make an NIU degree even more accessible, equitable and affordable, such as the Huskie Pledge and Rockford Promise, eliminated application fees, adopted test-free admission and ensured access to merit scholarships for all of our qualified students.

NIU also pursued initiatives that were aimed at retention, graduation and career success. High tech solutions, like Navigate, were paired with high touch support through the Center for Student Assistance and the Huskie Academic Support Center. Last fall, we eliminated courses that did not provide credit toward graduation, so-called remedial coursework; and we increased capacity in both academic advising and financial advising. Our continued commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion supports the success of all learners, who come to us with different lived experiences, perspectives and needs. Our students enrich each other and the campus, and it is delightful to see them back in our classrooms, labs and social spaces.

The original SEM Plan acknowledged several challenges that could impact future enrollments, but no one predicted the big challenge, the rise of a global pandemic, which has affected our lives and the lives of our students well beyond higher education and enrollment. The pandemic has created new and has increasingly exacerbated existing challenges and barriers for college students, especially those who are first generation or from underserved communities. Changes in learning modalities and technology deficiencies, along with financial, time management and personal stresses brought on by the pandemic, made it challenging for our students, particularly freshmen and first generation students, to stay focused on their studies and engage with support networks

designed to help them succeed. Rapid shifts in learning modalities also disrupted teaching routines for our faculty. And switches to online modalities were particularly challenging in courses more conducive to in-person learning. And I want to thank everybody in this room for the work that you've done over the past two years and the changes that you've made to support our students.

Disappointingly, even though NIU made significant gains in the size of its freshman class and experienced other highly positive enrollment trends, the university experienced a modest decrease in its overall 2021 enrollment, including a dip in the retention of first-year students, largely attributable to pandemic-related challenges. We are not alone. The challenges our own students have faced are the same that have been witnessed by every college and university across the country.

As of the fall 2021 semester, NIU's enrollment was just above 16,200 students. We wanted to remind you of a chart that was in the first SEM Plan shown here. This chart shows the difference between the projected enrollment with an implementation of the SEM Plan, the solid black line, compared to a projection of enrollment if we had not done the SEM Plan. That's the gray dashed line. The newly added red line demonstrates how closely our actual enrollment was tracking to our SEM Plan projections until the pandemic hit, which is the gray area.

NIU has a long history of educating students who come from lower income households, are first in their family to attend college and are students of color. And we continue our commitment to providing opportunities for all students in our region.

Although the previous SEM Plan was slated to run through 2023, the tremendous impact of the pandemic necessitated a new plan. To respond to the disruptions introduced by COVID-19, NIU has created this new SEM Plan 2.0 to ensure the proposed tactics and activities continue to support our overarching enrollment, equity and student success goals. SEM 2.0 builds on the successes and strengths of the original plan while responding to new pandemic-induced realities, especially the experiences and needs of our current and future students.

While many of the goals and strategies of SEM 2.0 are similar to its predecessor, the new plan notably puts increased emphasis on student persistence, student campus connections and the mental, physical, social and emotional needs of our current and future students.

From the outset, we wanted to make SEM 2.0 a more inclusive and shared process. We proactively reached out to the campus community and encouraged and received excellent feedback, primarily focused on student success. More specifically, we wanted to hear directly what the barriers and challenges students were facing and the specific ideas that could address those barriers. We wanted to learn how we could better acclimate and transition new students to our campus and community; and we also sought to understand what additional professional development faculty and staff needed to be most effective in assisting our students to be successful.

There are several key elements that are of focus within SEM 2.0. First, it provides a road map to assure continued investment in NIU's current and future students and establishes goals and strategies to guide our efforts to keep enrollment stable during this period of disruption. The plan incorporates the communication and implementation of an expanded plan for diversity, equity, inclusion, social justice and belonging to promote an inclusive community building initiatives that engage NIU faculty, staff, students and the community.

Both the original and new SEM plans are consistent, intentional and responsive to the needs of our students and community and make use of new technologies and opportunities, such as Navigate and Braven as they become available. In addition, Sem 2.0 aligns with the president's University Goals, NIU's Illinois Equity and Attainment Plan, or ILEA, the Higher Learning Commission Quality Initiative and the university's multi-year budgeting plan.

It is notable that our three goals shown on this slide are similar to the previous SEM Plan. This is purposeful as these overarching goals are woven into our mission, vision and values. We've included a SEM strategic theme, with each associated goal for simplicity's sake. These are brand identity; enrollment, access and affordability; and student success, persistence and graduation.

To hone NIU's brand identity, it's critical in today's market to understand our reputation with our primary audiences, mainly perspective students and their families; current students, faculty, staff, alumni and donors; high school counselors; and the local community. It's particularly critical to understand audience perceptions of NIU since the onset of the pandemic. The results from the 2019 study provided NIU with actionable recommendations for next steps that are already being implemented into our strategic communication and marketing plans. A brand perception study in fall 2022 will provide recommendations that will positively impact our brand identity and provide new enrollment opportunities and allow NIU to benchmark with our own prior studies and with top competitor institutions. Recognition of our achievements continues to grow in such areas as research, social mobility, workplace and diversity, equity and inclusion. As the NIU Foundation nears the launch of our most aspirational, comprehensive fundraising campaign, our ability to amplify Huskie pride and leverage outcomes data to better represent the value of an NIU degree, while also meeting the financial needs of our students, will be enhanced and energized through our united efforts.

While the primary focus of SEM 2.0 will be on student success, it doesn't mean that we're doing less to recruit or enroll new students. The programs and strategies we introduced over the last two years, designed to make an NIU degree more accessible, equitable and affordable, have been very successful. And we've seen a sharp rise in the number of applications, especially from new first-year students.

NIU's transfer student population is not only critical to enrollment efforts, but these students also persist in graduating at very high rates from NIU. Therefore, against many present challenges, most notably the large drop in enrollment at our top community feeder institutions, NIU must do more to attract and enroll students with prior learning credit. In a typical year, there are several hundred students who leave NIU prior to completing their degree and without enrolling at another university. Of these students, they are more likely to come from students of color, first generation students, low-income students and working adults. Our emphasis will be placed on students who have left within the previous two to three semesters and those who have a high number of earned credits and are closest to completing their degrees. Not only can this help with enrollment, but we have a moral imperative at NIU to assist these students in all possible ways to finish their degrees.

The primary goals of our new Student Financial Advising Services unit, headed up by Anne Hardy, is to help our students understand how to reduce expenses and to maximize available resources with a focus on helping students to engage in long-term planning and developing critical thinking skills around personal finances. And we always continue to explore ways to make an NIU education more affordable, whether through more strategic use of new and existing institutional funds or through new partnerships with organizations who are in alignment with our mission, vision and values.

NIU is committed to inclusive approaches and resources that successfully transition to all incoming Huskies, empowering them to reach their potential, achieve their academic aspirations and honor their rich lived experiences. We envision more robust transition programs for both first year and transfer students. We continue to work toward seamless, holistic and equity-minded advising for all of our students. This means supporting students as they develop an integrated academic, financial and career plan. Through partnerships with organizations, such as Braven, we will create a pathway for all of our students to receive career mentoring, to develop strong career networks and to acquire the social capital necessary to land a strong first job on graduation.

Engagement outside of the classroom is critical. Our plan includes creating opportunities for leadership development, inclusive community building and development of a sense of belonging. As a research institution, research and artistry are fundamental, and it is imperative that we connect all of our students to our faculty through participation in research and artistry opportunities.

Finally, our plan supports continued efforts to respond to the expanding physical, mental, emotional and wellness needs of our students. In particular, NIU, along with all higher educational institutions, have seen the impact of COVID on our students' mental wellbeing, and it is critical that we find strategies that respond to those needs.

To achieve the SEM goals articulated in this plan, the following key elements are essential. Funding and resources must be aligned with identified strategic priorities. Faculty and staff must understand and uphold the standard of excellence that is supported by an equity and student-centered mindset. And responsible parties must be held accountable for the achievement of outcomes associated with all performance indicators.

While the Sem Plan 2.0 is complete, the real work is just beginning. The goals and strategies identified in this plan are fundamental to the mission and vitality of this university. And the achievement of the strategies that support those goals will call on the entire NIU community. SEM 2.0 is data driven and intentional. The plan is consistent with, and builds upon, the goals and objectives of our original SEM Plan. Moreover, SEM 2.0 is responsive to pandemic-related changes in the operating environment.

And while this updated plan is very comprehensive, it is not meant to be an exhaustive list of the many initiatives already underway to support student success and recruit amazing new Huskies. Many of the impactful tactics described in our original SEM Plan have become just the way we do things. And I know we will continue to evolve and embrace effective practices.

An important first step in achieving these outcomes is our roll out of the plan, which is happening now. Just as we used an inclusive and deliberative process to develop SEM 2.0, we will introduce the plan to our community using engaging process, making certain that our campus community recognizes where we are going and their role in helping us get there. Understanding of the plan, resource alignment in response to its goals and action and accountability for every person on campus is imperative. We are asking each person in this room to read the plan, discuss it within your unit, department and division, and ensure that what you are doing now and what you will be doing in the future, aligns with its future and objectives.

And at this point, I will open it up for questions.

**G. Beyer:** My name is Greg Beyer. I'm the representative of the College of Visual and Performing Arts. And, Provost Ingram, thank you for the very clear and impassioned delivery of that presentation. Given the fact that it's rolling out now, as you said, where do we, as a body, find the plan. And how do we best go about sharing that with our constituencies. There's so much detail in what you offered that I am tempted to ask specific questions, but I will refrain from that just because I think that it would get into too much detail right now. But it might be interesting for us, as representatives, to have those discussions internally and then come back to you with organized questions from our colleges such that we can be a part of the conversation moving forward, particularly – and I think it will be interesting for the schools and departments to know about resource alignment as it engages and supports these goals, which are ambitious.

**B. Ingram:** Thanks so much, Greg. A couple things. One is it is on the [website](#). I don't believe we put the link with the presentation, but Pat can share the link to the plan, which is available on the website. And there's sort of a summary, and then there's a larger document that has more detail in it. And, of course, this presentation is available, as well. I think it would be great to have conversations in your units and then bring it back to your college and up through the Council of Deans. Or I'd be happy to sit down and have coffee with you someday and talk about what you see in the plan and what you see as ways that your college and your department can get involved.

**G. Beyer:** Let me ask one specific question that relates to my experience with some of my students. You are correct in pointing out that some of our students are dealing – a lot of our students, I think, on different levels and to different degrees of acuity – are dealing with the effects of COVID. Mental health is a big piece, and some students have come with some particularly acute cases that they've needed assistance. Always a go to is the [NIU Onebook](#) that offers some general information about mental health and the resources on campus. But when the rubber hits the road and I encourage a student to go and contact counseling on campus, invariably – and I think you probably already know this – those waitlists can be long, insurance that different students carry can limit their ability to access those resources. And I'm wondering, given what you pointed out, which is that that is a concern that is impacting students every day, if that's a particular area of prioritization with regards to the funding that will be available behind this plan.

**B. Ingram:** It is certainly an area of priority concern, and I think President Freeman talks about this very passionately. When I talk to other provosts around the country, certainly that is the number one issue on their minds – not only acute mental health needs, but kind of a general feeling of lack of engagement, general anxiety and unease. So, everything from very acute mental health needs to more generalized mental health needs. And we look at best practices. We look to our partners. We look to other institutions and what we read in the Chronicle and other places to think about how do we provide for that range of mental health needs that our students have. And yes, some of the tactics in here are about making sure that our counseling center is staffed. We have a partnership agreement to expand their services. How can we use telehealth? But then how do we provide information to other students, to the faculty, to how to identify needs and when to refer to the counseling center or to other kinds of opportunities on campus. And so, we are thinking about a full range of initiatives that could address the full range of mental health needs of our students.

I don't know if you wanted to add. I know this has been on your mind.

**L. Freeman:** Sure, I'm happy to add. As the provost said, we have the counseling center where absolutely there can be long waiting lists or inappropriately long waiting lists. We have telehealth psychiatry available through Northwestern Medicine, through our student health clinic. And we have Compassionate Care?

**B. Ingram:** Compassionate Edge.

**L. Freeman:** Compassionate Edge, I was close, a vendor partner who we engaged last year because of their availability and their expertise in culturally competent mental health services. And they do not have a waiting list at this time.

**B. Ingram:** Correct.

**L. Freeman:** Part of our challenge is making sure that students are actually aware of all of their options. And even when they're aware of all of their options, that they are not hesitant to use those options. I think we, as a campus, have a great responsibility for modeling the behavior of not being afraid to ask for help and making sure that our students understand that asking for help is an important life skill and not a sign of weakness. Along that spectrum of trying to build resilience and be proactive, in addition to counseling and psychiatric services, I think there's a real need to promote a wellness mindset to deal with stress, distress and anxiety before they manifest as more serious behavioral health problems. I received a proposal last week from the group on our campus that's been meeting to talk about wellness and health for all of our Huskie members of the community, both faculty and staff, as well as students. They've proposed that we create a presidential commission on wellbeing, and I'm looking at that proposal right now so that we can create something that's synergistic and integrative instead of duplicative, something that really helps us move forward in the way that we want to. So, I just want to echo Provost Ingram's thanks for highlighting this issue. It is an important issue, and I think all of us need to take care of our own mental health by practicing selfcare and modeling that for our students. But also, whether it's help with counseling or help with tutoring or help with advising, our students need to know what services are available. They need to know where they are. But they also really need to know that it's okay, that it's a sign of strength to take advantage of those opportunities.

**G. Beyer:** Sure, of course. The one very specific resource that you mentioned was new to my ears – Compassionate Care was it?

**L. Freeman:** Compassionate Edge. Don't make the mistake that I made.

**G. Beyer:** And is there a link to that on the counseling services website, because the last time I looked, I don't think I saw that, but I could be wrong.

**B. Ingram:** No, I think the referrals go through the counseling center, so you go to the counseling center, and the counseling center can refer you to Compassionate Edge as an option for receiving services.

**G. Beyer:** Okay.

**L. Freeman:** And I guess the other thing I would just add, Beth, is in terms of the resource alignment, which I think is very important, when we asked the Board of Trustees and they approved a very modest increase in our tuition for the cohort that's coming in, because as you know, with truth in tuition, our current students won't pay that, we promised that would go toward advising and mental health services, and we will be transparent with the campus as to how the funds are used for that purpose.

**G. Beyer:** Great.

**B. Ingram:** Well, thank you, everybody.

## **VIII. CONSENT AGENDA**

**P. Chomentowski:** We'll move on to consent agenda, and we do not have any.

## **IX. UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

- A. Proposed amendment to NIU Bylaws, Article 6, Grievance Procedures for Students  
SECOND READING/VOTE  
Peter Chomentowski, University Council Chair  
Beth Ingram, Executive Vice President and Provost  
Gregory Brady, Deputy General Counsel  
Lindsay Hatzis, Director of Investigations, Office of Ethics and Compliance

**P. Chomentowski:** So, we'll go to unfinished business. We're on the proposed amendment to the NIU Bylaws, Article 6, Grievance Procedures for Students. I will read the rationale on page 6, while Pat puts it up on the board.

The NIU Bylaws, Article 6, has been reviewed by a working group representing Faculty Senate, Student Government Association, Office of the Ombudsperson, Office of the Provost, Office of the General Counsel and Office of Ethics and Compliance. The proposal is to move procedure out of the bylaws, similar to the decision made by University Council in spring 2020 in regard to the grievance process for non-union faculty and staff and into the procedural documents to be maintained on the Provost's Office website. Revised Article 6 establishes the student grievance process. The substance of current Article 6 has been maintained in two procedural documents: 1) the Student Grievance Procedures and 2) Formal Student Grievance Hearing Guidelines. These procedures will be linked to from the revised Article 6. The modifications were prepared with a focus on providing a process that is understandable and accessible to all parties.

Before we discuss, can I get a motion and a second for the proposed amendment on the floor.

**S. Weffer:** So moved.

**D. Collins:** Second.

**P. Chomentowski:** Now I'll open it up for discussion or questions or comments on this proposed amendment. All right, if we don't have any discussion, since this is a second reading, I am going to move to Pat.

**P. Erickson:** The first thing, let's make sure everybody knows if they are a voting member. I'll get that list back up for you. If you see your name on this list, or if you're here today as an alternate for someone whose name is on this list, that means you're a voting member, and so you should have a clicker. They're in the back by the door. So, I don't see anybody going to get one, so you've taken care of that, thank you.

Quick refresher because I'm not sure we've used the clickers in University Council for a while. Remember they don't need to be turned off or on. They activate automatically when you enter your vote. They deactivate automatically after a few seconds of nonuse. If you click in your vote and then you change your mind, you don't need to delete your first vote. You simply click the other number that corresponds with your vote, and your new entry replaces your first entry.

The next slide I'm going to show you. To me, the equation for amending our NIU Bylaws is, I guess I'd say, multi-faceted. So, I want to make sure that everybody understands what their vote today means. First, a vote on an amendment to the NIU Bylaws requires the presence of 60 percent plus one of the total UC voting membership. Currently, we have 27 seated voting members. So, my math says that we need 18 members present in the room to proceed with the vote. I know we have 18 members present, and in a few minutes, we're actually going to have everyone click in together so we can know for sure how many of you are here.

Next, to become effective, an amendment must be approved by the greater of two options. The first option is a majority of the total UC voting membership. In this case, my math says that a majority of the total voting membership is 14. The second option is two-thirds of the voting members who are in attendance. So, now we have to determine how many people are in attendance. So, give me just a minute, and I'm going to open the poll. And when I do, I want everyone to press 1 or A on their clicker, and that will tell us the first number we need to do the math for that second option. And next year, I will try to have us look at a proposal to simplify our methods.

**P. Chomentowski:** That is actually on the list. We talked about it this morning.

**L. Freeman:** It is a nice illustration of why you should pay attention in math class, but other than that.

**P. Erickson:** So far, we have 20 people responding. Is everybody's clicker working? If you're having trouble with your clicker, just raise your hand and we'll help you. Up to 23, 24. Wow, that's great. Okay, I think I'm going to be satisfied with that. So I'm just going to close that out.

And I'm going to probably ask you to help me with the math. We need to determine this number, we had everybody click in, so what is two-thirds of 24 – 16. So, we know that 16 is greater than 14, so we need 16 yes votes.

So, I'm going to go down here a little more and talk about what your vote means. If you want to vote yes, you agree with the motion to approve this proposal, you're going to click 1, or it might be A on some of your clickers. If you want to vote no, that you don't agree with the proposal, you're going to click 2 or B. If you want to abstain from voting, you're going to click 3 or C. And I want to point out that, while abstaining is not a no vote, in this case choosing to abstain declines to contribute to the number of yes votes required to approve the motion. And so, therefore, it has very similar impact as a no vote. Is everybody ready? Okay. I'm going to open the poll. You're going to

click 1, 2 or 3, A, B or C, to tell us your vote. Everybody's had enough time? And that clearly passes.

Yes – 21

No – 1

Abstain – 2

**P. Chomentowski:** Motion passes. We talked about this today; it's a little...

**P. Erickson:** I know that was a lot, thank you.

**P. Chomentowski:** I could argue, but I choose not to, because you know what? She's right.

## **X. NEW BUSINESS**

## **XI. REPORTS FROM COUNCILS, BOARDS AND STANDING COMMITTEES**

- A. Faculty Advisory Council to the IBHE – report  
Linda Saborío, NIU representative

**P. Chomentowski:** We'll move to reports from councils, boards and standing committees. Faculty Advisory Council to the IBHE, Linda.

**L. Saborío:** How do you follow that? I don't know. I don't have any math problems for you to calculate today, so mine may not be as exciting as that was. That was really exciting.

At our last FAC meeting, we were asked to draft summaries of our work from the past year in our caucus and our working groups. I have two summaries available to share with you. One is from the College Debt and Student Affordability Working Group. And the other one is from the Public Caucus, if you're interested.

We'll start with Public Caucus. On the Public Caucus 2021-22 report, throughout much of the academic year, as you can imagine, we focused on the effects of COVID-19 on our institutions and how we, as faculty, conduct our business. In particular, we discussed teaching conditions under COVID-19, and then we also looked at research and the effects of the pandemic on our ability to conduct our academic investigations. It seems that all institutions, at least at the public level, made some adjustments to tenure timelines to accommodate the various disruptions to one's research, and we're still seeing that, I think, even this year.

We discussed the effects of the pandemic on enrollment at our institutions, and it seemed like there was quite a bit of variation in enrollment at our public institutions during the pandemic.

And then we discussed the effects of COVID-19 on shared governance, as well. Were administrations using the pandemic as an excuse to exclude faculty involvement in decision making. That was a question that came up from some of our other public reps. And so, we found a variety of opinions and examples provided on this matter.

If you want more detail, please just email me, and I can let you know; I can share that with you.

With the spring semester, we discussed whether institutions were making adjustments, and it seemed like most did, due to the rise of the Omicron variant. Some institutions delayed their starting date for spring semester. Some went online for several weeks to let the surge dissipate, and some continued as in fall 2021. So, really it just varied again there.

Faculty anxiety and mental health were other topics of discussion. Because of the stress and isolation caused by the pandemic, it was taking a toll on higher education employees. And with our nation becoming increasingly politically polarized, we also had a discussion about the intersection and politics on campus.

And now we are discussing the weight that student evaluations should have on faculty retention, promotion, tenure and raises, something that I brought up to the provost.

And that will wrap up the report. There's much more detail. If you want more, please let me know. I don't want to read the entire three-page document.

For the affordability, this working group has a lot of work ahead of it. We've been examining various issues involved in both student debt and the overall affordability of a college education for would-be college students. Our initial steps in this direction have been through information and data gathering. As we began gathering data, our focus changed from a purely national perspective to mostly a state one. Starting with the idea, as you know, of free tuition, we quickly identified over 15 states with some claim to offering free tuition. What we found was that those claims were based on widely varying criteria, definitions and stipulations, often pinpointing very specific demographic groups, such as senior citizens. We decided to pare down our states to what we considered were the strongest models for pursuing this, either on a national or state-by-state level. And we identified California, Delaware, Hawaii, Nevada, New York and Tennessee. We focused on states with specific programs, which might serve as potential models. For example, there is the Tennessee Promise, the Nevada Promise and the Delaware Seed Scholarship, which looked very interesting to us. Eventually we identified our criteria that was worthy for examination. The definition of free tuition, student graduation rates, limited restrictions to a program, how is the program funded, is it merit- or need-based, and is it a last dollar scholarship as in no income limitation on the scholarships.

Other questions and concerns we have about how to fund higher education. We're also going to look at how MAP grants are funded and distributed, the notion for expanding the not for profit debt loan forgiveness program, a look at students in forbearance, examine teachers' own forgiveness programs, unusual or creative programs that are already used locally, such as Waubonsee Community College, which offers a scholarship for two years there, with a subsequent transfer scholarship to WIU. And we're going to take a deeper look into student debt and possible solutions to stabilize, reduce or absolve the debt.

So, as you can see, we've just scratched the surface, and we have a lot of work ahead of us. More data that's going to need to be collected on the six identified states, need to collect more particular from California, which seems to have been a leader in providing reduced tuition rates for many years.

That is the summary of the working group that I'm on. If you have any questions, please let me know. If you would like more details, I can also provide you with the full report, or I can ask Pat to put it on the website. Any questions? Go ahead, Greg. You look like you had a question.

**G. Beyer:** Can you tell us a little bit more about the process that you used for data gathering, particular with regard to some of the innovative models that you found like the Two-Plus-Two option at Waubensee and WIU. That perked my ear, particularly, because it's a local community college, and I wonder what you know about that and what you can tell us about that and what sort of inspirations might come from looking at things like that.

**L. Saborío:** My answer is, I'll get back to you on that. It was one of my colleagues on the FAC who mentioned that particular program. I don't have any specific details, but I can definitely get those for you and get back to you. I don't want to give you the wrong information, so I'd rather just talk to her directly and get back to you. Very interesting, right? Also, the Delaware Seed Program looks very promising. A lot of information out there, I know.

**P. Chomentowski:** Thank you.

- B. University Advisory Committee to the Board of Trustees – report  
Felicia Bohanon, Holly Nicholson, Peter Chomentowski  
Katy Jaekel, Karen Whedbee, Greg Beyer

**P. Chomentowski:** We'll move on to University Advisory Committee to the Board of Trustees. Holly, do you have anything? Greg? I'll go, but I'm just asking since you're on there. I'll get started. I have some highlights from the last Board of Trustees meeting, which was a week ago.

Some of the main items directly from the president that they talked about were: One thing that was approved was sabbaticals for 2022-23. Some of the things that were talked about from items directly from the president was replacing the artificial turf field for the soccer field and the new artificial for the baseball field. Of course, this is for maintaining safety and competitive edge for our sports teams. And they talked about how funding and donations were being done for this. Another thing was approval for finding an interim for Sarah Chinniah. I guess most of you have heard that Sarah Chinniah, the vice president for administration and chief financial officer, is leaving during this month. So, they approved to find an interim for her until a search can be completed. And they also approved to use an external executive outside search firm to start the search for that position. The SEM Plan was presented by Provost Ingram and Sol Jensen. And we also had a presentation for the College of Education by Dean Piper.

- C. Rules, Governance and Elections Committee – report  
Holly Nicholson, Chair

**P. Chomentowski:** Now, I'll call on Holly again, Rules, Governance and Elections Committee. All right, she does not have an update.

- D. Student Government Association – report  
Devlin Collins, President  
Dallas Douglass, Speaker of the Senate

**P. Chomentowski:** Student Government Association.

**D. Collins:** Good afternoon, everyone. This is my second to last University Council meeting. After this, I will not be able to see you all again in the same room again, as I will no longer be a member of the Student Government Association. After our conversation today with Peter, at the next meetings, I will be introducing the next administration to you all, as we have the results of the election. So, at this point in the year, we're just working in our offices, just finishing up our transitions. And we're just here to support you all while we're winding down our operations for the year. Thank you all for inviting SGA to the conversation this year. I've had a great opportunity enjoying the conversation and just continuing on the work this year. Thank you again.

**P. Chomentowski:** Thank you, sir.

**L. Freeman:** And good luck on finals.

- E. Operating Staff Council – report  
Holly Nicholson, President

**P. Chomentowski:** Operating Staff Council, Holly? No report, all right.

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

**P. Chomentowski:** Supportive Professional Staff Council, Tom.

**T. O'Grady:** Since this is an open meeting, you can always come back and see us again. The SPS has a few things to advise on, and Felicia gave me a list of three things. One is that Joe Lovelace has been selected as the SPS personnel advisor. The nominating committee has looked at the names for the presidential and staff awards for SPS, and those names should be released later on today. We are reviewing the data and writing a report from the SPS campus climate survey, and we would anticipate that a report will be released at the end of May on that. And the last thing is just as information, SPS has taken nominations to be on the SPS Council again, and we are anticipating those elections to be held in April and be concluded by the end of April. And that's all I have. And don't ask me any questions, because I'm not Felicia.

**P. Chomentowski:** Thank you, sir.

## **XII. 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 meets monthly at 3 p.m.  
Spring 2022 meeting dates: Feb 2, Mar 2, Apr 6, May 4

**P. Chomentowski:** One of the last things is, of course, our next meeting is May 4. And one other thing I'm going to bring up before we adjourn. At Faculty Senate last week, we gave out some awards to people for service. One of the things I wanted to bring up – yes, I'm going to bring this up again, Ferald – is that, if anyone didn't know, we noticed that our parliamentarian, Ferald Bryan, had actually been parliamentarian for 25 years at Faculty Senate. So, we presented him with a token of our gratitude. But, as Pat said today, it's probably even longer you've been parliamentarian of this group, hasn't it? But I just wanted to let you know because it's probably something you didn't know that he's given 25 years to Faculty Senate and more than that. I just want to give him a round of applause for everything he's done.

### **XIII. ADJOURNMENT**

**P. Chomentowski:** With that, I will move to adjournment. Can I have a motion and a second adjourn the meeting today?

**H. Nicholson:** So moved.

**J. Monteiro:** Second.

**P. Chomentowski:** All those in favor adjourning the meeting, say aye.

**Members:** Aye.

**P. Chomentowski:** All those opposed, say no. Please no abstentions, because you know where they go. All right, meeting is adjourned.

Meeting adjourned at 3:50 p.m.