

## TRANSCRIPT

University Council  
Wednesday, May 3, 2023, 3 p.m.  
Altgeld Hall 315  
Northern Illinois University  
DeKalb, Illinois

**VOTING MEMBERS PRESENT:** Arado, Bohanon, Freeman, Garcia, Geller, Ingram, Jaekel, Kassel, Middlemist, Monteiro, Nicholson, O'Grady (for Costello), Olson, Pietrowski, Rogers, Simonson, Srygler, Tatara, Vaughn, Walther

**VOTING MEMBERS ABSENT:** Beyer, Costello, Cripe, Douglass, Falkoff, Hulseberg, Majeed, Scheibe,

**OTHERS PRESENT:** Blazey, Bryan, Edghill-Walden Montana, Saborío

### I. CALL TO ORDER

**L. Freeman:** That was agenda item Roman numeral I, the call to order.

### II. VERIFICATION OF QUORUM

**L. Freeman:** And I was able to do that because I am assured by Pat that we do have a quorum. So, for the record, Pat?

**P. Erickson:** We absolutely do.

**L. Freeman:** Great.

### III. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

**L. Freeman:** In that case, can I have a motion to adopt the agenda.

**M. Geller:** So moved.

**F. Bohanon:** Second.

**L. Freeman:** All right, we have a motion and a second. All in favor?

**Members:** Aye.

**L. Freeman:** Any opposed? Great.

#### **IV. APPROVAL OF THE APRIL 5, 2023, MINUTES – Pages 3-5**

**L. Freeman:** Now, may I have a motion to approve the April 5 minutes.

**M. Geller:** So moved.

**L. Freeman:** Second?

**A. Rogers:** Second.

**L. Freeman:** All right, we have a motion and a second. Any discussion? All in favor?

**Members:** Aye.

**L. Freeman:** Any opposed? All right.

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

**L. Freeman:** Roman numeral V, have we received any requests for public comment?

**P. Erickson:** We have not.

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

**L. Freeman:** All right, we are moving through the agenda quickly to the president's announcements. I just want to use the time for announcements today. First, to give a little bit of an update on what's going on in Springfield and then to just review the progress on the searches that we have going on.

Matt Streb is in Springfield as we speak. Today is the higher ed reception. Public university chancellors and/or members of their staffs, will be represented there. Gov. Pritzker has committed to stopping by. There will be a lot of informal advocacy conducted at the reception tonight to continue to remind members of the General Assembly of the importance of supporting the governor's budget, which has a seven percent across-the-board increase for higher ed, \$100 million in MAP and continuation of AIM HIGH.

There is no reason at this point to think that the budget is in jeopardy, other than the fact that this is the time of year in the budget cycle with just a couple weeks left, when General Assembly members start to get nervous about what's in the budget versus how much money is had. And people like to flex their muscles, and you just are always nervous that you have to keep telling the story. The university presidents and chancellors are writing another letter signed by all 12 public university presidents and chancellors to advocate for the importance of investment in higher ed, what it means to our state's economic development, opportunity for students across the state, and also the importance of investment in public universities to stem out-migration of Illinois high school students to other states, something that the Governor's Office is very worried about.

If everything goes according to plan, we only really have like two-and-a-half weeks left of the session. Those of us who've been in Illinois for a long time know that doesn't always go according to plan, but in the recent past it has. So, we will keep driving the important message home, and if

we need advocacy from the folks in this room, we will certainly let you know. Any questions on Springfield other than that?

All right, so as everybody knows, or anyone who works here has experienced, this is certainly the season where we search, celebrate and graduate. At next Thursday's, May 11, Board of Trustees meeting, we will have appointments of four leaders going forward to the Board of Trustees for approval. I think everybody already knows from a public announcement that David Grewell will be joining us as the dean of the College of Engineering and Engineering Technology. I want to compliment the provost and the members of the search committee on making a terrific hire. Dean Grewell and his spouse were here on a house-hunting trip about a week or so ago, had open bagels and coffee in the College of Engineering, made everybody feel welcome, and I think everyone is looking forward to having him onboard.

We'll also have the appointment of the interim dean of the College of Education. Again, that's been publicly announced as Bill Pitney, someone who's very familiar to most people who have been involved in shared governance at this institution as he is a former Faculty Senate president, as well as a former vice provost for faculty affairs.

I am able to say today that we will have the announcement of our next vice president for research and innovation partnerships at the Board of Trustees, and, although the press release hasn't come out yet, the ink is dry on the contract, the press release is in motion, and we will be welcoming NIU alumna Yvonne Harris as our next vice president for research and innovation partnerships. I hope many of you had the opportunity to meet Dr. Harris when she was here. Her story is a wonderful Huskie story of someone who came here, really had a transformative experience, fell in love with science and discovery science. She has a bachelors and masters and Ph.D. from our Department of Biological Sciences obtained while she was a single mother with the support from our incredible faculty who opened her horizons to things she didn't even know existed or were possible; has gone on to a very positive career in higher ed and research administration; and we're very, very pleased to welcome her back to the Huskie family.

And at the Board of Trustees meeting, we will also have an item for approval for an interim dean of the College of Business, but we have not dried the ink on that paperwork yet, so that announcement will not be made today, but will be ready by next Thursday.

We do have a couple of searches that are still in progress. Right now we are actually smack in the middle of the two candidates who are interviewing for vice provost for faculty affairs. We had the first one earlier today, and we have the second tomorrow. The open forum tomorrow is at 1 p.m.

We are two-thirds of the way through the search for our next chief HR officer, and the final candidates in that search will not be on campus until May 15. On May 15, there will be a 2:15 to 3 p.m. open forum that will either be in Altgeld 315 or on Zoom.

And then we are just at the cusp of bringing in the finalists for the vice president of diversity, equity and inclusion and chief diversity officer. The first candidate will be with us May 8. The second candidate will be with us May 10. And the third candidate will be with us May 12. The third candidate is only able to interview even as a finalist, remotely, because of obligations on the candidate's campus, not surprising this time of the year, so, nothing should be read into that. But

again, we'll be moving those two searches forward. The chief HR officer appointment doesn't need to go to the board, but the vice president for diversity, equity and inclusion will go to the board in June. We are confident that we will have a hire by then.

I just do want to thank people who have taken time from their schedules, shown up for individual or small group meetings with the candidates and/or attended the open forums. I know that this is a crazy busy time of year and things drag on. But the positions that are left to interview are very key positions, and I'm not sure that it sends a candidate a great message when there are 40 people online and one person in the room in the audience. So, if we could just try to remember that we're recruiting these people to be our colleagues, just as we're inquiring if they're up to the job, and a warm physical presence is helpful in doing that if people can swing it. The President's Office website has the times of the open forums on the website, and if people could just be a little strategic about trying to attend in person, I think that would be helpful.

That concludes the president's announcements. Does anybody have any questions about the searches?

This is the time where I usually very joyfully and as quickly as possible hand the gavel over to my colleague, Ismael Montana. But today, before I do that, there is a different gavel that I want to hand him. And that is the gavel of honor for serving as Faculty Senate president and University Council chair. And I just hope that all of you will join me in a big round of applause for someone who just gave us exceptional service for the past year, moving key university initiatives forward, representing the faculty voice so well whenever it was needed and someone who should take great pride in his time of service as Faculty Senate president. [applause]

And now that I've embarrassed you, I'm going to give you the other gavel and ask you to say a few words before you take the meeting back over. I'm going to leave this up here so everyone can see it.

**I. Montana:** I don't really know where to start. I want to take this opportunity to thank you, thank my colleagues, faculty, staff and students that we work for. This past year, quite frankly, has been one of the greatest honors of my life and my career here at NIU. I cannot find the words to describe my feelings and gratitude for the opportunities that were opened up to me in getting to know many, many of you, and getting to work with you, and also to be able to count on what I see as transformational changes that we are undergoing at this institution. So, to be part of that, for me, is very gratifying, and I'm so grateful. It would not have happened without the trust, without the confidence that has been placed in me. And I hope I have done my best to this point. Thank you very much.

## **VII. ITEMS FOR UNIVERSITY COUNCIL CONSIDERATION**

- A. Moving Illinois Toward Equity: A Framework and Toolkit  
Vernese Edghill-Walden  
Vice President for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion and Chief Diversity Officer

**I. Montana:** Our next agenda item takes us to Roman numeral VII., items for Faculty Senate consideration, and we have two agenda items. The first one is VII.A. We have Dr. Vernese Edghill-Walden, vice president for diversity, equity and inclusion and chief diversity officer, who is going to provide an overview presentation on Moving Illinois Toward Equity: A framework and Toolkit. Without further ado, Dr. Edghill-Walden, the floor is all yours.

**V. Edghill-Walden:** Good afternoon. I'm pleased to be here this afternoon to make this brief presentation. The last meeting that I attended, I continue to hear about the work that the IBHE and the state is doing. And while I was sitting there, I was like, wait a minute, I'm also on a state committee. I think that the community needs to hear about that, as well. Thank you for the opportunity to present. I think that the work that the state is doing around equity is really going to be transformative and really, I think, sets the tone for what other states could be doing to support equitable practices for our students.

As you might have heard, probably from President Freeman several times, she refers to the Higher Education Strategic Plan, A Thriving Illinois: Higher Education Paths to Equity, Sustainability and Growth, which is a strategic plan. And this strategic plan called for the passing of HB5464, which was signed by Gov. Pritzker in 2022 requiring that all public post-secondary institutions review and revise existing policies and practices that exacerbate equity gaps in enrollment, retention, completion, student loan repayment rates. And also to implement equity plans and practices to close those gaps. This was, and is now, something that is requiring all public universities to do in our state.

As a result of that, the IBHE, as well as the ICBB, which is the Illinois Community College Board, came together and developed an equity plan advisory committee, which I am a part of that particular committee. The goals and the charges of that particular committee is to create a shared understanding of best practices in closing equity gaps on Illinois campuses, to cultivate information from other approaches across the state and the nation, to promote equitable outcomes, and the development of recommendations for components and methods and practices and strategies to be included in this equity framework.

So, this committee has been working since February to develop a consistent framework, because when you say now that there is a law that says that every public institution has to create an equity plan, you can imagine that there will be several iterations of what an equity plan could look like. And so, this committee, this advisory group, has been brought together to develop a template and a framework so that when we are asked to create or to complete this equity plan, there will be a framework that all the institutions will use.

So, I said that I'm on the committee, but in addition to me, there are other CDOs from across the state. There are faculty, as well as administrators from two- and four-year colleges and universities. And each month – we started meeting in February – we've been hearing from IBHE, the Illinois Community College Board, the Partnership for College Completion, the State of Illinois' Office of Equity, and the Office of Community College Research. Just this last time, we also heard from someone that actually presented on the equity faculty tool kit that you've heard about from Linda Saborío in the past. Each of these groups come before our advisory group to present to us the kinds of things we're doing across the state and to help us determine what should be put in our framework.

Some of the things that we have been working on as an advisory group is defining what equity is for the state. How we should be defining it from a student-centered approach. Creating common language around what is diversity, equity and inclusion in our state so that we can all be using the same language when we are communicating in these plans. And then really finding synergies with existing equity plans. I say that, because NIU has been working on equity plans for a long time, since 2016, 2017. And we were one of the early adopters of ILEA, which is the Illinois Equity in

Attainment plan, one of the early adopters of creating this, of developing this plan. This advisory group is working with ILEA to make sure that we are not creating separate equity plans, where each institution is not creating two separate siloed equity plans, and that the state's work and the Partnership for College Completion's ILEA plans are in alignment. I think that's really important, because as an institution that's been doing equity plans, we do not want to do just a perfunctory equity plan because the state said so. We want to make sure that it is embedded not only in our strategic enrollment plan, but in the work that we're doing with the Partnership for College Completion.

The two other main areas that the state is asking each public institution to ensure that they are doing is that they are disaggregating data by race and by gender, and that we are using data responsibly, and we have a consistent method and understanding for analyzing that data.

Surprisingly, there are many institutions in our state that still do not believe that it is appropriate to disaggregate data, and it is a barrier to helping us develop statewide strategies for student success. So, this committee is actually going to be asking for each public university and college to disaggregate and to use a common way of using the data and analyzing the data.

And then lastly, we are also asking for each public college and university to administer campus climate surveys. I'm happy to say that in all of these areas, I believe that NIU has been prepared to do this work with the state and, in many ways, is seen as an example of what the other colleges and universities should be doing, because we have done campus climate surveys, we have been disaggregating data for many years, and have been working with ILEA. And we do already have a definition for equity.

It is really important for us to continue this work as a state. Our last meeting is June 1 as an advisory group, My prediction is that sometime in the fall the state will probably come back and say that there will be a deadline to produce an equity plan. And so, I've already been in conversation with my colleagues that we've been working on our ILEA plan about this information. And so, they are aware that we need to just continue to make sure that our equity plan, our existing equity plan, is up to date so that, when the state says we need to produce an equity plan, that we are prepared to do so.

I want to thank everyone for getting us to this point, because we could not have done it alone. And I really believe that this is a great opportunity for us to move forward as a state and how we can look at student-centered ways to close equity gaps for our students. Thank you. Any questions?

**L. Freeman:** I just want to make a couple of comments. I want to thank Vice President Edghill-Walden for her leadership. There is a good reason that NIU is ahead of the game, and that's because she has been a very strong partner to Academic Affairs and Student Affairs and Administration & Finance and other major divisions on campus during her time here. And that's brought us to a point where we can take an incredible amount of pride in the work that you've done internally and externally to make NIU a better place. I want to remind everybody that we're having a party to celebrate Dr. Edghill-Walden's accomplishments. I believe that is on Friday, May 19, at 3 p.m. in the Barsema Alumni & Visitors Center, so please mark your calendars.

And I also want to take a moment and thank Provost Ingram, who has been a proponent of using data to make decisions and disaggregating data to drive student success. In addition to all of the initiatives that Vernese just cited, our Higher Learning Commission Quality Initiative has been

completely based on disaggregating data in gateway courses to drive student success and make sure that all of our students have all of the possibilities they had in their hearts when they came here opened to them. And we're going up to reaccreditation and the way that we've executed that plan has been, again, extremely admirable, and I think that we should just give both Dr. Edghill-Walden and Dr. Ingram a big round of appreciative applause, because I think for both of them, this is their last University Council meeting in their roles. [applause]

**V. Edghill-Walden:** Thank you for your leadership. I think Linda had a question.

**F. Bohanon:** I just wanted to make a comment. I just wanted to say, thank you, Vernese, particularly with the work in collaboration you've done with PCORE [Presidential Commission on Race and Ethnicity]. We've worked through a lot of these issues, particularly in terms to getting access to data, in terms of looking particularly in terms of coming up with a definition related to equity, and a number of issues that we've been wrestling with for a number of years. So, particularly on behalf of PCORE, I just want to say thank you for your support.

**V. Edghill-Walden:** Oh, thank you.

**L. Saborío:** I'm going to echo what President Freeman already said. I think NIU's not only a model for other state institutions, we're the leaders in this. So, thank you for your work. But I do have a question about resistance. Other than the responsible data usage, have you seen resistance from other institutions about DEI initiatives, and how do we respond to those? This is coming from a place of love and conversations in the FAC [Faculty Advisory Council to the IBHE].

**V. Edghill-Walden:** I think that we've seen the resistance for a long time. We've seen the resistance when there was a call for all four- and two-year institutions to join the Partnership for College Completion, around the ILEA work in developing equity plans. There were many four-year institutions that started with that and then decided literally that they didn't think that they needed this and it wasn't for them. But right now, HB5464 says it is for you. So, I think that there were many institutions that up until this point were not thinking about this, did not think it was important. And so, now the public institutions, now they have to. That is why I think this framework is so important because we don't want those institutions that are now trying to play catch-up just do it as a check-the-box, and that the state is working with presidents and chancellors to make sure that this is not something that sits on the shelf, but is something that is reviewed and assessed and looked at throughout the time that we have this. I think we will always see resistance, but I think the way in which the state has been advocating for this, and statewide adoption of it, I think could change in many ways. I don't know if the president has any other opinions on it. She's leading the presidents and chancellors.

**L. Freeman:** I guess I would say, I don't think there's resistance across the presidents and chancellors. I think that there is a very strong data orientation on the IBHE and within the Partnership for College Completion, and to look not just at race and ethnicity, but also first generation and Pell-eligible and rural, which are other groups where there are significant gaps in our state. I will say that not all of the boards of trustees of all of the public universities are as equity focused as ours. We are very fortunate to have a board of trustees that are very well aligned with the mission, vision, values and goals of this university and the public mission of this university, and I don't think that's necessarily the case for all 12 of the public universities.

**V. Edghill-Walden:** I'll just also say that one of the exercises that we've been doing monthly when we meet is to talk about what do we think the barriers are, and where do we think there might be areas that need additional support to move this forward. And many of my colleagues did cite board of trustees and general counsel offices that have typically said that they thought it was against the law to do this. But it's not, because the state agencies actually have been giving the institution the disaggregated data, so I think that's the type of resistance that you see, but I think that at the end when we're talking about Thriving Illinois and what it's going to take, we have to look at everyone in Illinois.

**L. Saborío:** Thank you.

**I. Montana:** Any other questions or comments? Great. If not, we'll move on.

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

**I. Montana:** Our next agenda item VII. B., recognition of University Council members who have completed their service. As the semester draws to a close, President Freeman and I would like to take a moment to thank all of you who have served on University Council this year, and most especially to our members who are completing their terms at the close of this spring semester. It takes time and effort to attend meetings and to do the work of shared governance, and we are grateful to our faculty, instructors, staff and students who serve in this role. So, thank you everyone. Thank you very much, and we appreciate your service and contribution to shared governance. I don't know if you have anything to add.

**L. Freeman:** I just want to say the refreshments in the hallway are for University Council in appreciation of your service. So, feel free to go get some and come back in the room or to stay after the meeting to enjoy.

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

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

**I. Montana:** Next we have agenda item VIII., Reports from Councils, Boards and Standing Committees. Item VIII.A., we have the Faculty Advisory Council to the IBHE; and, Linda, if you want to take time to go grab something, that's okay.

**L. Saborío:** I cannot sit next to Katy, she causes trouble every time. Last time there was the mint issue; you'll have to ask her about that next time.

Before I start, I would like to take a moment to congratulate Professor Jaekel, our new director for the Center for the Study of Women, Gender and Sexuality – am I not correct, you're shaking your head, no.

**K. Jaekel:** Inaudible



**L. Saborío:** It's a fantastic role! [applause] Last month, I had a wonderful drive out to Macomb, Western Illinois University. In fact, I even had a moment where I was, this is wonderful. At one point, I was on a very narrow road behind a large metal, possibly moving object. Looked like it was probably something that fell from an alien mother ship, I don't know. But I did get around it without damaging the NIU vehicle – I want to make a clear point of saying that, because Pat told me to be careful about that.

Anyway, we had an excellent presentation by Chris Merrett. He's the dean for innovation and economic development and director of the Illinois Institute for Rural Affairs. He presented on promoting local rural development in Illinois. It was a great presentation. I have the slides from it if you want to know more, and I'd be more than willing to share that with you. In fact, we might have a working group take up some of the pieces of this – there are many pieces – to developing rural Illinois and working more in collaboration with him on this.

One of our working groups, the prior learning assessment, is going to be bringing a document forward to the FAC for approval at our next meeting. So, if that gets approved, then I'll be sure to share it with Pat, because I won't be seeing you this summer. I'll be doing research in Mexico City, bye bye. And I'll have her post it on the Faculty Senate FAC page.

And that's about it. We're just about wrapping things up in our groups, so not a lot to report out today. Heading down to Springfield on May 18 to meet with, hopefully, a few state reps. I'm not supposed to call it advocacy day, but it's advocacy day, right? And then our May 19 meeting is down in Springfield.

That concludes my report. It was more exciting to talk about alien mother ships than anything else. Thank you.

**I. Montana:** Thank you, Linda. Questions, comments for Linda?

- B. University Advisory Committee to the Board of Trustees – no report  
Felicia Bohanon, Holly Nicholson, Ismael Montana  
Katy Jaekel, Karen Whedbee, Brad Cripe

**I. Montana:** Our next agenda item is item VIII.B., University Advisory Committee to the Board of Trustees, members of which include Felicia Bohanon, Holly Nicholson, myself, Katy Jaekel, Karen Whedbee and Brad Cripe. The report on the BOT's last meeting, which took place on April 3, was already given at the UC April 5 meeting. And the board's next meeting will be May 11. So, because of that, we do not have a report.

- C. Rules, Governance and Elections Committee – no report

**I. Montana:** And with that, we will move on to our next agenda item, and that would be VIII.C., Rules, Governance and Election Committee – no report.

- D. Student Government Association – report  
Raaif Majeed, President  
Debbie Allen, Acting Speaker of the Senate

**I. Montana:** VIII.D., Student Government Association. Do we have a representative from SGA?

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

**I. Montana:** Okay, we will move on to agenda item VIII.E., Operating Staff Council. Holly?

**H. Nicholson:** That is too long of a walk, sorry. Happy last meeting of the year. Just two things, our elections are now open, so if you work with staff, please encourage them to vote, because they get to decide who is rooms like this, and so it's very important. Second of all, our emergency fund has been depleted; we've given, I think, almost \$4,000 since its inception, so something to be proud of. So, we're back in fundraising mode and hope to come back later this summer and give out some more awards. Thanks.

**I. Montana:** Thank you. Any questions for Holly?

**H. Nicholson:** I forgot our scholarship winners. We had four. How much money did we give them, Treasurer, please?

**Unidentified:** Inaudible

**H. Nicholson:** \$1800. So, the children of dependents who work here. This year, I was fortunate to know all of them. From their applications, they're just so incredible, and I felt really inspired in the moment, reading their statements to be a better person for them. Thanks.

**I. Montana:** Thank you.

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

**I. Montana:** Okay, we will move on to agenda item VIII.F., Supportive Professional Staff Council, Felicia Bohanon.

**F. Bohanon:** Just two comments: We also are in election season. We are, right now, in the process of confirming nominations, and then we'll move forward with elections before the end of the month. The Supportive Professional Staff Council gave out two student scholarships in the amount of \$750 each to students who were impacted by SPS members. Thank you.

**I. Montana:** Thank you. Any questions for Felicia, comments?

## IX. 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. 2023-24 UC schedule: Sep 13, Oct 11, Nov 8, Dec 6, Jan 31, Feb 28, Apr 3, May 1

**I. Montana:** So, we are on to the last two agenda items, the first being agenda item IX., Informational Items. And they are informational at best. One thing I would like to draw your attention to would be item IX.Q., the 2023-24 University Council schedule. The first meeting, for those who will be on University Council, will be September 13, and you can see the rest of the meeting dates there.

## X. ADJOURNMENT

**I. Montana:** Other than that, unless I missed anything, I would say we are on to adjournment. And with that, I will entertain a motion to adjourn the meeting.

**H. Nicholson:** So moved.

**I. Montana:** Holly Nicholson. Second?

**Unidentified:** Inaudible

**I. Montana:** All in favor.

**Members:** Aye.

**I. Montana:** Thank you, the meeting is adjourned.

Meeting adjourned at 3:40 p.m.