

TRANSCRIPT

University Council
Wednesday, September 13, 2023, 3 p.m.
Altgeld Hall 315
Northern Illinois University
DeKalb, Illinois

VOTING MEMBERS PRESENT: Birch, Bohanon, Elish-Piper, Falkoff, Freeman, Hensley, Howell, Johnson, Martin, Middlemist, Monteiro, Morris, Myung, Njue, O’Grady, Phares, Pitney, Richter, Stoker, Sutcliffe, Vaughn, Walther, Ziarati

OTHERS PRESENT: Acardo, Bryan, Creed, Mooberry, Ngassa, Reneau, Saborío, Sumner

I. CALL TO ORDER

L. Freeman: It’s such a beautiful day that I want to start right at 3, because I want everybody to be able to get back out in the sunshine and really enjoy the gorgeous fall weather. Let me just start by saying welcome to Fall 2023.

II. VERIFICATION OF QUORUM

L. Freeman: And we’ll go right into the agenda and verify that we have a quorum.

P. Erickson: We do have a quorum, and a quick reminder to fill out that attendance sheet that’s on your chair, and then just leave it there and we’ll collect them after the meeting. And those from last year all remember that we really want you to use the microphone. So, if you have a comment or a question, you can go to the microphone that’s in the center, or we’re glad to share, or there’s more over here on, I guess, it’s your right. Thanks

III. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

L. Freeman: We’ll move to III. Can I have a motion?

Z. Birch: So moved.

L. Freeman: All right, and a second?

D. Phares: All right, all in favor?

Members: Aye.

L. Freeman: Opposed? All right.

IV. APPROVAL OF THE MAY 3, 2023, MINUTES

L. Freeman: The packet had the May 3, 2023, minutes. May I have a motion to approve? So moved, Bohanon. Did you notice how she said her name when she did that. We feel like we haven't done this in so long, we have to all remember how it works. So, thank you, Felicia, for being such a good example. And we need a second. All right, there you go, Vaughn has seconded it. We have a motion and a second. All in favor?

Members: Aye.

L. Freeman: Opposed? All right.

V. PUBLIC COMMENT

L. Freeman: Now we're at public comment. Parliamentarian, has anyone requested to address this body?

F. Bryan: None today.

VI. NIU PRESIDENT LISA FREEMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

L. Freeman: In that case, we're moving on to VI, which is the president's comments, and thank goodness I can handle those, probably with a little more grace than I handled the first part of the agenda. I'm a little rusty. I started out by saying welcome to the fall semester, and I want to say it's been a wonderful semester so far, for so many reasons.

We have wonderful new members of the NIU leadership team, and I want to just call out who they are, so when you see their faces, if they're here, they can stand and wave, you know who they are. We have chief HR officer, John Acardo, who joined us at the beginning of July and who's going to be speaking to this body later today. We have vice president and chief diversity officer, Carol Sumner. She joined us in mid-July, I don't think Carol is in the room. We have also the new vice president for research and innovation partnerships, Yvonne Harris. She joined us at the beginning of August. Just because folks aren't in the room, that doesn't mean you can't go over to their offices and say hello or go up to them if you meet them at a meeting.

We also have wonderful new members of the university's academic leadership team. We have interim executive vice president and provost, Laurie Elish-Piper, who is here with us. She has a new team in the Provost's Office, vice provost for academic affairs, Alicia Schatteman; vice provost for faculty affairs, Bárbara González. And then we have new leadership for our colleges. A new dean for the College of Engineering and Engineering Technology, Dave Grewell; new dean for CHHS, Kelly Fiala; we have Bill Pitney serving as the interim dean of the College of Education; and we have Denise Schoenbachler serving as the interim dean of the College of Business.

And I name them all even though some of them aren't here, because I want to make the point that these new Huskie leaders are a really special group. Across the board, they chose NIU based on the university's mission, vision and values, our public mission and the opportunity to offer the students that we serve transformative experiences and be part of helping them achieve their dreams. Also notable, both John Acardo and Yvonne Harris are Huskie alumni. Yvonne has, actually, three degrees from NIU, so this is really a homecoming for her. Bill Pitney and Denise Schoenbachler

agreed to return to leadership roles when they were asked, because they wanted to promote stability and smooth transition in colleges that they cared deeply about. Carol Sumner, our VP and CFO, has just walked in, so there you go. And then both Bárbara and Alicia in the vice provost roles, former participants in our faculty leadership programs before they successfully competed in competitive searches for their roles. And so, these are people who really love NIU and are really committed to serving the university, and that means serving the students, faculty and staff. That means serving the people you represent and the people in this room. And I feel very, very lucky to have them. So, that's part one of why this has been such a wonderful semester.

Before I move on to more reasons, I also want to welcome Felix Ngassa, who is in the room with us today. Felix is working with me as a fellow of the American Council on Education. He is, in his real job that he's taking a little respite from, a professor of chemistry and the head of the Faculty Senate at Grand Valley State, and I urge you to chat with him. And if he reaches out to you, please take the invitation and help him learn about higher education and about NIU as an institution.

I also want to welcome all of the University Council members, and all of the faculty and staff colleagues that you represent across NIU, back to campus. And I want to say thank you. Thank you to you and to the many, many university leaders, faculty and staff members, who volunteered, participated and otherwise showed up in so many ways to make Move-In Week of Welcome and the start of classes fun and engaging for our students. Seeing that was very gratifying for me, but even more importantly, it was inspiring to our students. It sent them a welcoming and reassuring message and demonstrated our strong commitment to an investment in their success. And so, you wouldn't think that putting on a t-shirt and helping people by serving cookies at the president's picnic is part of our overall retention strategy, but honestly, it is. It says to students and their very first impression of the university that these are people who will roll up their sleeves and help you. And that is what makes NIU a special place, and I'm just very, very grateful to be able to say that.

And speaking of our students, I want to say more about that constituency, our amazing students. They turned out in large numbers and with great enthusiasm for all of the Week of Welcome events and again for the first week of classes. And I would be remiss if I didn't mention our Greeks and our student athletes who helped students and their families on Move-In Day in that very, very, very warm, hot and humid weather. The two hottest days of the year were Move-In, and it was just great to see the softball team, for example, helping our students move in, reminding grandparents to stay hydrated, making sure that everything got done in a very organized way. And it was just fun to see them all kicking back and having a good time.

I want to thank our SGA president, Olivia Newman, who organized the golf cart so she and I could cruise around on the first day of classes to meet students and either point them in the right direction or actually scoop them up and deliver them to their destinations where they were headed. And it was just nice to her how excited our students were about starting classes.

And then yesterday was the day that our enrollment numbers became official as the tenth day census. And the press releases will go out tomorrow, but I wanted to give this group some of the highlights today. The fall 2023 freshman class at NIU really continues to demonstrate that high achieving students from a variety of backgrounds are choosing our university. The total freshman enrollment is 2,202, which is a bit down from last year; but what is not down is the average high school GPA. For the second consecutive year, the GPA meets our record high of 3.42, the high school GPA of our incoming new freshmen. Nearly 20 percent of them have 4.0 high school GPAs, and more than a third of them, 36 percent, had high school GPAs of 3.7 or higher. In 2023, the

honors program added 282 new freshmen. The honors total enrollment is now 1,073 honors students, and that's an increase of 14 percent over last year. So, we are attracting very academically accomplished students.

And still the demographics of our incoming students remain reflective of our public mission. They are an economically, socially and racially diverse group of learners. Fifty-seven percent are first-generation college students, and over 70 percent of our new students are students of color. We also experienced an enrollment increase in new transfer students this fall, an increase of six percent over a year again, to just over 1,300 students. And importantly for the first time in NIU's history, Latinx or Latino/Latina students represent 25 percent of our total undergraduate population. So, this is a milestone. It's a significant achievement that places the institution on a trajectory to be fully designated a Hispanic serving institution. So, that is a percentage that needs to be maintained. There's an application process, but we're on track to be designated in 2025 as an HSI, and that opens up new possibilities in terms of funding and resources available to us from the federal government. Those resources will help, obviously, Latino/Latina students, but they will also help our students. They will ensure that our institution can serve all of our students better.

Recruitment and retention of international students has been another area where we've seen success. Our total enrollment of students from outside the U.S. surpassed 1,000 for the first time since 2016. So, we're seeing that come back after the pandemic. And in all our international students represent 73 different countries, so that's something to be proud of.

And then I think we all know, while enrollment of new students is essential to the academic mission, we can't take for granted the importance of student retention. Student retention is morally and economically the right thing and the important thing for the university to do. In combination, recruitment and retention have really helped us maintain our overall enrollment of students. The total student enrollment remained relatively flat, so this year, we're at 15,504 compared to 15,649 last year. So, it's a difference of about 150-ish students, so that's less than a one percent difference. So, I think we can say total enrollment is relatively flat. It actually exceeded the targeted enrollment minimum that we had in the university goals. We put in the university goals a range of enrollment that we were targeting. The bottom of that range was 15,360. And we developed that target with a model that considered the smaller pool of continuing students that resulted from two years of negative pandemic impact. And it really was the result of intention and intense efforts by our faculty and staff across the university that we saw student persistence return to near pre-pandemic levels. Our retention of first-time, full-time students increased over five percentage points year-over-year, from 65 percent in 2022, up to over 70 percent in fall 2023. We're climbing back to where we were pre-pandemic, and that's really important. And the group of students who took the biggest hit during the pandemic was our most vulnerable students. Actually, our first-generation students, is the group of students that saw the most negative effects of the pandemic on retention. And retention rate of first-generation students was, actually, up six percentage points year-over-year.

So, that's good news! I am very, very proud of the efforts of this university and where we landed. You know, we will put out a press release; the press release will highlight all of the positives; the Daily Chronicle and perhaps other newspapers will hammer on the fact that we're 150 students down and a percentage point down. But we set retention persistence, a welcoming environment, helping the students succeed, as an intentional goal. We worked hard on so many fronts, looking at gateway courses, thinking about tutoring, helping students find resources. And I think we have a lot to be proud of and absolutely nothing to feel bad about. So, let's give ourselves a hand on all of our good work on our student enrollment.

A. Budget and Planning Update

L. Freeman: And then, finally, I want to explain why on your agenda, in the item under the president's announcements, there is something that says, "Budget and Planning Update," because this is going to be a standing item. It's there to allow shared governance groups to engage around topics related to multi-year budgeting and planning. And I just want to put a little context on that. Those of you who have been here for a while – and when I look around the UC membership, there are some people who have been here as long as I have or longer, who know that this is actually the third time that the university has embarked ambitiously on multi-year planning. The first time was interrupted by the budget impasse; the second time was interrupted by the global pandemic. But so far, we are moving forward, and we are doing that with a road map and a set of recommendations that the university leadership has embraced that came out of the budget planning work group. You may remember that we had Vice President Edghill-Walden and Dean Brinkmann and Jerry Blazey, our then-vice president for RIPS, go around and talk to all the colleges and all the councils and bring what they heard back to the provost and the CFO and me. We reacted to that in writing, and we incorporated many of the suggestions, if not all of the suggestions, from the budget planning working group into the university goals, into annual and multi-year goals, and we've been using that as a road map. And a lot of great work was done over the summer, and a lot of great work continues every day, work that's being done by the finance team under Dr. Middlemist and work that's being done in Academic Affairs under Dr. Elish-Piper. And the two of them, by virtue of their positions, are responsible for ensuring that NIU's budget is academically responsive – that's the provost's role – and fiscally responsible – and that's the CFO's role. But, honestly, it's also all of our roles to make sure that we always know who we are. We're an academic institution; we're here to serve students; we're here to offer them transformative experiences. And part of our obligation is to make sure that we're here for many generations, and that means that we have to have budgets that work.

One of the recommendations that the budget planning work group made – and this was built into a university goal – was to try and build annual and multi-year budgets that are realistic about the expected revenue and truly inclusive of all the university's expenses. And that means inclusive of student support services and financial aid and building renovation and repair and maintenance and competitive employee compensation and all the things we know we're going to have to spend money on every year to remain a viable institution. And so, if we use the realistic projections and the real expenses as the starting point for aligning recurring resources and expenses and eliminating recurring unsustainable annual deficits, we have work to do. We have run a missile lines deficit between revenues and expenses for a number of years. That number looks bigger when you consider everything we always have to do, and we don't give ourselves the option to defer things. And so, as you could expect, moving forward getting things in alignment, reducing expenses, reallocating resources, growing revenue, that's going to take work. And it's work that's not going to be easy. There are going to be things we do that are not pain-free or painful, depending on how you want to look at it. But that's why it's really important that we engage shared governance groups in the conversation, that we make sure the stakeholders that you represent are engaged in the conversation and that we're all working together to take steps and to move down paths that will move the university to a long-term sustainable position.

I know there's really good work that's already going on, and I see this as a venue for people to share the work they're doing, to put forward ideas, to get feedback. And I know we have some schedule presentations from Dr. Elish-Piper and Dr. Middlemist coming up, but we also just want this to be

an opportunity where I can give an update or I can call on someone, who has a plan moving forward, to give an update, so that we're all apprised of the progress and the work that's being done all through the year.

So, it will be a standing item. Some months there may not be a lot to say. Some months there may be more to say. There may be a more significant presentation. But that's all I have to say today. There will be more detail to follow, sometimes from me, sometimes from George and Laurie and sometimes from others?

Do I have time to ask for questions before I hand the gavel over to Ben? Anybody have any questions?

N. Johnson: Natasha Johnson, OSC. Will there be an opportunity where we can hear from areas or departments about concerns. For example, with Recreation, if we experience more cuts, then we have to reduce the hours for students at the Rec, because the budget for salary is the number one expense.

L. Freeman: Let me say that there won't be an opportunity, there will be lots of opportunities. There will be opportunities for the leaders over divisions to work with the people in their divisions. There will be opportunities where we come together and her concerns. But in addition to concerns, and in addition to saying, "we can't afford to give up more resources," we also want to hear, "we have an idea to generate revenue if we can get a little investment, and this is the timetable we think we can say that idea will start to generate revenue. Can we work something out?" When we talk about reallocating resources, I think everybody's mind always goes to the money. But resources are also time, and resources are also people, and resources are also about the efficiency of processes and transactions. And so, I think we also want to hear of people who are being more efficient in ways that aren't that difficult, that can have a big impact. And I know we have some work going on in Academic Affairs that we can highlight; we'll show that in an upcoming. So, the answer, Natasha, is that we don't just want to hear that it's going to be hard to cut; we want to hear that there are sacrifices that we think we can make; there are things we think we can all do and look at those things together.

All right, I am going to turn the gavel over to the Faculty Senate president, and chair of the University Council, Dr. Creed.

VII. ITEMS FOR UNIVERSITY COUNCIL CONSIDERATION

- A. Welcome and Information Sharing
Chief Human Resources Officer John Acardo

B. Creed: Thank you so much; and with that, I'll turn us to agenda item VII, which is Items for University Council Consideration. We are pleased to have John Acardo, our chief human resource officer with us today to introduce himself and to provide some information related to the work of his office. Welcome, John, and the floor is yours.

J. Acardo: Thank you and good afternoon, colleagues. It's a pleasure to be here today, and I know it's a beautiful afternoon so I will try to be as brief as possible in the presentation to allow for questions and to continue our agenda moving forward. But I did prepare a presentation, which is up on the slide deck here. Just as a way of introduction and talking a little bit about what you can

expect to see from Human Resource Services over the next 12 to 18 months, as well, so I'll just move through the slide deck and give a little bit of an introduction and background about myself and then what you can expect.

The agenda for today – just a quick introduction. Before we talk about some of the things you can expect to see from Human Resources, I do want to identify some principles that I have for change that you can expect from my leadership team and from myself as we move through this process. Give you a glimpse of what to expect over the course of the next fiscal year. I do want to talk about what we're planning to do over the next fiscal year and months to come aligns with our university goals, our mission and our values.

Talk about communication strategy, because I know with any type of change, we need to really exemplify communication so that there is stakeholder feedback, as well as knowledge from stakeholders as to what to expect in moving forward. And then I'm happy to take questions on the presentation or anything else that you might have as well.

So, a little bit about me. I just wanted to give you a little bit of a snapshot. I know many of you probably tuned in to the interview process or have learned about some of the things about me over the past few months that I've been here, but just a little bit of some high level. I have now over 20 years of HR and management experience. I am a proud Huskie alumni. I have a bachelor's degree from NIU, a master's degree from Keller Graduate School of Management and several certificates from several notable organizations around the country, as well. Six Sigma, that's process improvement, process management; mediation skills, diversity, equity and inclusion for human resources; and business analytics, really focusing on data-driven decisions.

Some personal information about me: I have three kids, Charlie, Joe and Marcie. Charlie is 11, Joe is 8, Marcie is 6. And my partner, Megan and I live here in DeKalb. We relocated from UW-La Crosse where I was previously employed, and we're happy to be back in northern Illinois, which is where we both grew up. I am an avid runner, so if anybody is interested at getting up at 4:30 a.m. and running with me, I am happy to take you up on that opportunity. I'm signed up for the Corn Classic and the Pumpkin Fest Run. I will be wearing lots of NIU gear, so please come find me and I'd be happy to run with you. I just ask that you keep up with me.

L. Freeman: I'll be walking in the Corn Fest. So, if you can't keep up with John, you can come with me.

J. Acardo: Coming to University Council today, I was asked to answer a question; and that is: "what are your plans to enhance the human resource function at NIU?" I want to talk about what the really means and align it to some guiding principles that I have when it comes to change. I think it's important to start out by saying, this means change. It means things are going to be modified, replaced, addressed, reviewed, substituted, whatever the case may be, things are going to change in human resources. And so I want everyone to be prepared and to know what is guiding our principles in that regard.

I also think it's important to know that it's not my plan. It's our plan as a campus community. I'll get to that in a little bit, but over the past 60 days, I've had the great opportunity and pleasure to talk to many of you to hear what are the pain points, what are the concerns, what feedback do you have,

what ideas do you have for improvement. And I think you'll see a lot of those things come out and some of the ideas that we have discussed as a leadership team in HR and as an entire team in HR to move forward.

But before that, there are some guiding principles that I have for leading change. And you can't have human resources without humans, right? That's in the title. So, people are our purpose. That is a critical principle that I have guiding everything that we do. Do the proposed changes or solutions that we will be considering put you first? That is by far the paramount principle that I have. You are my purpose. I am here to help serve you.

I also think it's critical to note that we keep our values in focus, both NIU and HRS. If you look at our website, we have an acronym for C-R-E-A-T-I-V-E, which stands for many, multiple words that keep us motivated: customer service, reaction and making sure that we are serving our customer base, our constituents here on campus. But if we're not doing something that is in align with our values or our strategic goals, then it's probably not worth considering. We need to make sure that there is full alignment with our values and what we are promoting and everything that we do in HRS.

The third is that the decisions we make are data driven. My team will tell you, and my wife will tell you, that I'm a geek when it comes to data. I love looking at analytics. I love looking at data, because I believe it tells us an important story. And so, no decision can be made without knowing what the data is telling us. And an important consideration of that is it requires collaboration. You can't just look at data in a vacuum. You have to understand some of the meaning behind it. And that means we have to go out and talk to our constituents and stakeholders to find out what that data really means. And more importantly, how does it impact you? And so, we need to take that into consideration as we evaluate what solutions we will be looking at.

The last question and the last principle is to ask "Why?" I think this is a driving principle in academia. Ask "Why?" Challenge the status quo, dig deeper, try to find out the true meaning of things. And so, it's important to ask us, "Why?" What is holding us back? What is important with our values that will make things better? And so, always, always, always, ask "Why?"

So, what got us here today? I've been here for just a little over 60 days, and I've had the great pleasure and opportunity to listen and meet with many of my colleagues across campus, meeting with university leaders including the senior roundtable. I attended and heard from our deans. I talked to key campus stakeholders in multiple meetings and learned about many of the different areas for opportunity in HRS. I most recently hosted a listening session with about 200 of our HRS liaisons from throughout campus. These are our active, heavy users of many of the processes that operate across campus to make sure payroll is executed on time, that help us with those add-pays, that help chase down those benefit utilization forms, all of those different elements. We have a large contingency that helps with the process.

And so, I wanted to hear from them. What are the areas of opportunity for HR, and they gave me a lot of information, great, valuable feedback on areas that we can really focus on and help make a change to create that efficiency we were talking about earlier and to find ways that we can streamline and automate and simplify processes to give back more time to you to focus on the critical things and strategic things that we need to focus on.

And I think it's important to note I heard from the entire team. The entire HRS team had the opportunity to review this presentation and be involved in the conversations leading up to this conversation with campus today. Hearing from them about where they view some of the areas of opportunity is equally as important as hearing it from all of you. They see it firsthand; they know the ins and outs and they know what's required, the compliance elements. And so, where are those tolerance points that we can either take some additional risks or that we need to be strictly compliant on. And so, hearing from them was incredibly important, as well.

So, do we go from here? HRS, over the next several months, in the next fiscal year, is going to focus on three specific areas of global change. And that's utilizing our current tools that we already have in existence here today that we will begin to utilize to make enhancements. And the first and foremost is PeopleSoft. I hope many of you have heard of that tool. PeopleSoft is our enterprise resource tool that manages our payroll operations, that manages our finance. There's just a plethora of data that goes into the enterprise tool, but we use it primarily for the HR and to process payroll and maintain employee records. We'll be making enhancements to that, and I'll get to a little bit of that in a moment.

The next is creating organizational efficiency in HRS. It's important for us to take a step back and look at how we have ourselves structured. Are we serving the campus community to the best extent that we possibly can? And do we have the right talent in the right places? We'll be taking some time to evaluate that as we go through the process. And I'll talk a little bit more in detail about what that means.

Lastly, I want to talk about communications and reporting; and that embedded in our overall global areas will help all campus stakeholders. I think more robust communications and being visibly seen across campus for HR will help us identify where there are pain points and areas of opportunity relatively quickly. But it also gives us an opportunity to get to know you and help support you and the efforts that you are doing for NIU, as well.

The other piece of that, to me, is reporting. I think that goes hand in hand with communications. Using tools that we already have in existence, to really give back to you more data transparency on what's happening within your units as supervisors, as employees, finding out those metrics that are meaningful to you, that help you manage your individual department or unit or help you keep track with your career intentions here at NIU, as well.

I put together a little bit of a timeline to at least give you a visual representation of what this might look like. Now, I'm going to put the caveat out there that this is not set in stone, so don't take a glimpse of this and say, "John, why didn't this happen on day 71 or month 71." I think it's important to know that all of this is fluid, and it will change as we go through the discovery process and begin to implement some of the changes. But putting some of the kind of larger themes and changes within each of these buckets I hope will help illustrate some of the changes campus can expect in the coming months.

Under our PeopleSoft projects, again, these are tools we already have in existence that we're just going to begin to turn online with regards to the functionality piece in the system. And I think very soon you'll be hearing more about multiple direct deposit accounts. Right now we only offer you one option that you have your funds deposited to. We will be enhancing that tool allowing you multiple direct deposit accounts.

Updating notifications – some of those emails and triggers that come from PeopleSoft are pretty vanilla and generic and often look like spam. And so, I think it is incredibly important that we brand that with the NIU theme and put more additional information on it to help you know what it's about and where you can get additional information.

Some of the larger, more robust changes that will be coming are with time & labor and absence management. I know over the past several years, NIU has taken that administrative efficiency project and identified time & labor as a priority to be able to begin to automate and digitize our timekeeping process. Right now we manage it through an excel sheet, and that gets sent to multiple parties. We want to put that in a digitized format with automated workflows and allow for that approval process to happen in the system. The creates a unique experience and a customized experience for everyone who may have to keep time on a timesheet. When you log in, you'll have specific work rules that will allow you to enter time as it should be for your collective bargaining agreement or by your classification. And so, this project you'll be hearing a lot more about over the coming months.

Same with absence management. We are exploring the opportunity to mitigate and reduce the need for the benefit utilization forms where you'll be able to request time off and be able to report it in the same PeopleSoft system and get real time access to your leave balances and entitlements.

These processes will save significant efficiency across the campus. A few years ago, through that administrative efficiency program and project, there was a survey done to find out how much time was actually spent in utilizing and processing many of these HR functions, and it's a lot. It is a huge time commitment for many of our departments to the tune of five to ten hours a week to be able to process, chase and track down a lot of these individual forms. And our hope is to find ways in which we can reduce that significantly to return to those employees time to focus on more strategic initiatives within their units.

Segue again to HRS organizational efficiency. We really do want to focus on beginning to have a conversation with our HRS team on how we can help support talent acquisition and really return to campus a stronger support apparatus for when it comes to recruitment process. We need to capitalize on this to find talent at the right time and place so that we have that strategic and competitive advantage against our peers. People are our business, and so we need to make sure we have the opportunity to get them found and placed as expeditiously as we can.

We do want to evaluate the entire HRS organization and find out where we may need to support our campus better. We need to develop framework for that initial hiring ranges of our staff related positions, begin to develop some additional framework around our compensation philosophy and automate many of the forms and processes that we currently have that are paper based, i.e., the tuition waiver, your direct deposit updates – I see some nodding heads in the background – and create those efficient automated workflows that keep you apprised of where things are at every step of the way. But then you get an email saying that it has been entered and you can expect to see something in the next few days.

To help with this, I think two of the areas I want to focus on with the communications and reporting are with the introduction of an HRS ticketing system and queries and reports for campus stakeholders. Right now, our team in HR is exploring bringing online the possibility of creating an HR ticketing system. This will help us internally better manage communications with you. To our end users and our stakeholders, you shouldn't notice anything different. It will still be like you're

getting an email right from one of our HR staff and know who to contact. But right now we have close to 30 – and I'm not kidding with that number – general accounts that we have set up that you email information to and then it gets acted on. Creating a ticketing system allows for one central medium for us to be able to check that information, staff it and respond to you expeditiously. And so, I think you'll see in the coming months that, as we begin to explore this implementation, a better response rate. You'll be able to track where things are at in the process, and we'll open up that transparency for how we are communicating with you and where things might be at when you ask us questions at HR.

Again, with reports and queries, some of the information I shared during my interview process, we are actively looking at exploring how we can redevelop some of those items and give back to our management team, as well as our employees. But, those are reports about just basic employment information for your employees, their titles, their appointments, their contract dates, their salaries; you know, is there any type of milestone that's coming up, such as a probation or a service anniversary, and give that information to the supervisor so they have readily available. I know one thing that we worked on at UW-L was really helping faculty find out where they're at in their career process, when are they coming up for promotion, giving back some of that data transparency that we already record in our PeopleSoft system back to the campus stakeholders.

It's important to note that what we look at is aligned to our university goals. Goal 1A and 1B both focus on building capacity for shared leadership and creating tools and support for our supervisors and employees with the solutions that we develop and present to campus for conversation. It's also important to note that, when we create more efficient processes, we're helping you focus back on your strategic goals that may not be directly related to 1A or 1B. It's important to me that we create simplified, streamlined processes that get you to focus on the work that you're here to do and the work that you love. Similarly, I think it's important to point out too that the president sent out a message today about sustainability. Many of the processes that we rely on in HRS are paper based. Going to an automated and digital format eliminates the need for that paper waste. And what we do with that paper is we scan it in and then we get it ready for shredding. And so, we'll have an opportunity to significantly reduce our footprint when it comes to the use of paper. I think from that perspective, we're aligning to many of our values that we have as an institution to really connect forward with those.

The next steps are focusing on communications. I'm giving you an illustrative example of what to expect, and it really is starting at the beginning, continuing to listen to our stakeholders about what's important to you as we begin to design some of these enhancements, have our standard launch meetings. If you look at a project timeline, there is always the launch. I always like to say, we should have pizza and a huge party and be able to celebrate the launch of this project.

But to report to campus stakeholders milestones – 45 days, 90 days, 180 days, how are we doing – to important key stakeholders, such as our HRS timekeeper and processors, those 200 that I mentioned earlier, letting them know where we're at so we can course correct immediately if we're sensing that we're going to be deviating from where we need to be and giving a legitimate and structured solution that's going to be effective.

Doing demonstrations for key stakeholders, what I call preview events, that will give you an opportunity to see what's happened and to see a live demonstration of what you can expect in the future. And again, continuing to have those key stakeholder trainings, campus trainings and then ongoing feedback sessions to make sure that what we're providing is continuing to be enhanced and ready for campus stakeholders needs.

So, that's my presentation for today. I am more than happy to talk on any other topic that you might have and yield for questions. I appreciate your time and attention and look forward to working with you on many of these initiatives and on projects you might be focused on, as well.

Not used to not having questions.

B. Creed: I think that may have been sufficient wait time. If there are no questions, we thank you, John, for the presentation and the introduction.

VIII. CONSENT AGENDA

- A. Approve the 2023-24 University Advisory Committee to the Board of Trustees membership roster, confirming Larissa Garcia for a three-year term and Katy Jaekel as Larissa Garcia's alternate for the fall 2023 semester per NIU Bylaws, Article 8.4.1.1
- B. Approve Department of Economics Professor George Slotsve and Assistant Vice President and HR Chief of Staff Liz Guess to serve as NIU's academic and non-academic representatives, respectively, to the State Universities Retirement System Members Advisory Committee (SURSMAC).
- C. Approve the University Council tenured/tenure-track faculty serving on the FS-UC Rules, Governance and Elections Committee, and approve the University Council Personnel Committee per NIU Bylaws, Article 2.1.1(A) and 2.2.1(A)

B. Creed: That brings us to item VIII, which is the Consent Agenda. The consent agenda includes approving the 2023-24 University Advisory Committee to the Board of Trustees membership roster, which includes confirming Larissa Garcia to a three-year term with Katy Jaekel serving as Larissa's alternate for this fall 2023 semester. It includes the approval of George Slotsve and Liz Guess to serve as NIU's academic and non-academic representatives to the State Universities Retirement System Members Advisory Committee, the approval of University Council tenured and tenure-track faculty serving on the Faculty Senate-University Council Rules, Governance and Elections Committee and finally, the approval of the University Council Personnel Committee. Can I have a motion to approve the consent agenda.

B. Pitney: So moved.

B. Creed: We have a motion from Pitney. Second?

S. Howell: Second.

B. Creed: Second from Howell. All in favor, say aye.

Members: Aye.

B. Creed: Okay, we've approved the consent agenda. Thank you, and this helps ensure our committees are populated and we can engage in the work that's necessary for the year, so, thank you.

IX. NEW BUSINESS

- A. Proposed amendment to NIU Bylaws, Article 8, to remove Article 8.3,
Campus Security and Environmental Quality Committee
FIRST READING
Scott Mooberry, Director, Environmental Health and Safety

B. Creed: Item IX is New Business. We have an item under new business, item A, which is related to the Campus Security and Environmental Quality Committee. We have a first reading from Scott Mooberry, the director of Environmental Health and Safety, on a proposed amendment to remove this committee. Scott, please come to the microphone and present the proposal.

S. Mooberry: Thanks. Good afternoon. On behalf of the Campus Security and Environmental Quality Committee, I appreciate the opportunity to present the proposal today for the University Council to consider the decommissioning of the committee. As noted on the board, this will be the first reading, so I'm going to read the proposal as follows:

The Campus Security and Environmental Quality met April 19, 2023, and unanimously voted to dissolve this committee. This proposal comes with the support of NIU Chief of Police Darren Mitchell and Associate Vice President for Facilities Management and Campus Services John Heckmann, who have historically had a vested interest in the committee.

Currently, Police and Public Safety, Facilities Management and Campus Services, and Environmental Health and Safety all have mechanisms and workflows in place to respond to the needs of the university community without the assistance of this committee. This appears to be evident as the committee has entertained few requests for assistance from the university community in recent years in accordance with the scope of the committee bylaws.

Furthermore, there is optimism that the spirit of the committee bylaws will be incorporated into existing student-centric committees and emerging committees including but not limited to the new and improved version of the Environmental Sustainability Task Force and the Presidential Commission on Well-being.

With that being said, I'm happy to entertain any questions.

B. Creed: It looks like there are no questions at the moment. Thank you, Scott.

S. Mooberry: All right, thank you.

B. Creed: Just a reminder, this is a first reading; it will come back next time.

X. REPORTS FROM COUNCILS, BOARDS AND STANDING COMMITTEES

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

B. Creed: Onto the next item, item X, Reports from Councils, Boards and Standing Committees. Item A is a report from the Faculty Advisory Council to the Illinois Board of Higher Ed, and Linda Saborío will share the report.

L. Saborío: I don't have an official report from the FAC today, but I do like to use this first meeting to introduce myself and talk a little bit about the council and its role. To begin with, I've heard that there is some kind of rivalry happening between dogs and cats, so I'm just going to get this out there. I have two cats, and I used to have a fish named Dawg. I don't know if that counts at all. It was spelled D-a-w-g, and our fish named Dawg mysteriously disappeared. I was putting food in that fish tank for a week before I realized there was nothing floating around in there, so it is still a mystery to this day – what happened to the fish named Dawg? That's a little bit about me, probably more than you really want to know, but anyway.

I am NIU's representative to what is called the Faculty Advisory Council to the Illinois Board of Higher Education, or we call it the FAC. It's a representative group of faculty from across the state of Illinois and acts as an advisory council to the Illinois Board of Higher Education. The council has 36 members, and there are 12 from the public institutions, 12 from private institutions and 12 from the community colleges. We meet on the third Friday of every month – so our first meeting is this Friday, Sept. 15 – at a different institution across the state of Illinois. This Friday, for example, we're meeting down at Illinois Valley Community College, which is near Starved Rock. Apparently, they are going on a hike Thursday before the meeting; I won't be at the hike. We can send whoever it was who likes to run to do the hike.

During our meeting, generally we will meet with the host institution, we'll invite a guest to present at the meeting. It could be a new initiative on campus or a new program on campus that they want to share with the group. And sometimes we'll meet with state representatives, depending on where we are and the availability of the state representative in that area. We also meet in our caucus groups and we have working groups. I think our working groups are going to continue the same this year, but we are going to add a group on technology in education (they're still working on their title), and they're going to be looking at AI and remote learning.

In addition to reporting out to Faculty Senate and University Council, I also am interested in hearing from you all if there is something that you would like me to bring forward to the FAC to maybe address, maybe a state policy or something happening on campus here that you think might affect other institutions across the state.

Are there any questions? Please don't ask me about the fish named Dawg; I don't know what happened to the fish named Dawg. I can say it's hard to have a burial when there's no body, so that was cutting out a fish. Any questions? Great. I look forward to hearing from some of you if you have ideas for us. Thank you.

B. Creed: Thank you so much, Linda.

- B. University Advisory Committee to the Board of Trustees – report
Felicia Bohanon, Natasha Johnson, Ben Creed
Larissa Garcia (Katy Jaekel alternate for fall 2023), Karen Whedbee, Brad Cripe

B. Creed: Item B is University Advisory Committee to the Board of Trustees. I'll present the report, and if Felicia or Natasha or anybody else who was there would like to add on, please feel free. The Board of Trustees met on August 24 and engaged on several topics through their three subcommittees. These meetings are open to the public and can be attended virtually or in person, so I do recommend taking a look at those agendas as they become available and thinking about attending sessions on topics that you may find interesting. There's a lot of great information that's shared in those spaces, a lot of questions they can answer for you in those meetings or questions you may not even know about yet.

The first of the three subcommittees was the Academic Affairs, Student Affairs and Personnel Committee. They shared status updates related to the search for the dean of the College of Business, including the use of an external search firm in that process. There was discussion of the changes that were submitted to the Illinois Board of Higher Education related to program changes, the list of faculty who retired in the past fiscal year, as well as those who were granted emeritus status for this upcoming year were recognized. The vice president for student affairs, Clint-Michael Reneau, summarized the work of his office related to engagement and retention. And there was also discussion of the Braven First Year Program and Greek revitalization efforts.

RILLA or the Research, Innovation, Legal and Legislative Affairs Committee received state and federal reports. And related to those updates, there was a presentation by General Counsel Bryan Perry related to the recent Supreme Court case related to the use of race in university admissions processes. He's been invited, and will present, to this body, I believe, it is the December meeting. The vice president of RIPS, Yvonne Harris, shared the report from the sponsored projects administration. And the last item that was presented was a presentation from the director of the Institute for the Study of Environment, Sustainability and Energy, Thomas Skuzinski, about sustainable development.

The final committee, which is FACFO, the Finance, Audit, Compliance, Facilities and Operations Committee, had a presentation from CFO George Middlemist that talked about the university's financial position, as well as updates on the financial statement audit, our responses to the audit findings and other related aspects of the financial health of the university. There were three action items that were taken up during that subcommittee and ultimately approved by the board. The first was that the board approved anticipated expenses for participation in an upcoming college bowl game, so when we get there, we'll be ready to go. The board also approved a new heat exchanger for Lowden Hall. And the board approved a contract with Miles Education for the College of Business to assist in recruitment efforts, and this is part of those comments earlier about those opportunities to make small investments for the chance to grow revenue potentially and address recruitment issues. And finally, there was an update related to the future of the Health Informatics Technology Center, which helped give an overview of where the process is, what has changed and an expected timeline for that to roll out.

That's the report that I have. If anybody else who was there would like to add or correct me, please feel free.

C. Rules, Governance and Elections Committee – no report

B. Creed: Item C is the Rules, Governance and Elections Committee, and there is no report.

D. Student Government Association – report
Olivia Newman, SGA President
Cole Hensley, Speaker of the Senate

B. Creed: Item D, the Student Government Association report from Olivia Newman and Cole Hensley. Do you have a report?

C. Hensley: I am Cole Hensley, the speaker of the SGA senate. Just a little intro, I am a senior, and I am studying industrial engineering. As far as SGA goes, our first meeting is this Friday at 2 p.m. in the Holmes Student Center Sky Room. Olivia Newman has been having her directors apply; those should be going up next Friday. Besides that, Olivia and I have been working on getting a lot of events planned for the year. Any questions?

B. Creed: Not a question, but just a welcome to the position and welcome to this body. We look forward to working with you and learning from your perspective throughout the year. Thank you.

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

B. Creed: We'll move on to item E, the Operating Staff Council report. Natasha, do you have a report.

N. Johnson: Yes. Hi, I'm Natasha Johnson, and I'm president of the Operating Staff Council. The Operating Staff Council is working on communications, like I said at Faculty Senate. We're also working on our priorities, so we'll have a survey going out. Once we get the data back from that, it will help us understand where we need to go as a council. We will be hosting Council of Councils this year, which is October 20 at the Barsema Alumni and Visitors Center. And that's pretty much what we've got going on now. We've got all of our committees filled up; we're going to get appointments sent out so people can start moving forward with those specific committees. Thank you.

B. Creed: Thank you, Natasha.

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

B. Creed: Our final report is from the Supportive Professional Staff Council, Felicia.

F. Bohanon: We had our first meeting of the year after taking a break for the summer. So, that was one of the new things that we've done over the last two years; we went back and looked at our bylaws and realized that we really don't take on a lot during the summer. So, we're in the process right now of looking at our bylaws, making some changes related to where we are at this particular point. And then also looking at some of our committees, we realize that, particularly in terms of some of the things that the council has dealt with previously, many of those issues are being

addressed in other places at the university. Is that really a place where we can complement or is there no longer a need? So, we're looking at our structure at this point. We meet tomorrow, and I'll more of an update next month.

B. Creed: Thank you, Felicia. Looking forward to seeing you tomorrow.

XI. INFORMATION ITEMS

B. Creed: Item XI is our Information Items. Please look through the items as they interest you. There are links to the minutes from the various councils, committees and other groups around campus. I'd like to draw your attention to items Q-S toward the bottom. Item Q is the schedule for the upcoming meetings. Item R is the annual reports from a select group of committees, so please feel free to look through those reports. And then S is the reminder about the annual call for honorary degree nominations. Please feel free to look through those as you see fit.

- 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
- R. [2022-23 Annual Reports](#)
- S. Annual call for [honorary doctoral degree nominations](#); materials must be submitted by Friday, Oct. 27.

XII. ADJOURNMENT

B. Creed: This brings us to our last item, item XII, which is Adjournment. Can I have a motion to adjourn?

Z. Birch: So moved.

B. Creed: Motion from Birch. A second?

N. Johnson: Second.

B. Creed: Johnson. All in favor?

Members: Aye.

B. Creed: Thank you all.

Meeting adjourned at 4 p.m.