

Minutes of the
Board of Trustees of Northern Illinois University
Research and Innovation, Legal and Legislative Affairs
Committee Meeting
February 15, 2024

CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

The meeting was called to order at 10:14 a.m. by Committee Chair Veronica Herrero. Recording Secretary Rachel Jurs-Lauderdale conducted a roll call of the Trustees.

Committee Vice Chair Rita Athas: Present Trustee Dennis Barsema: Present

Trustee John Butler: Present Board Chair Montel Gayles: Present

Trustee Leland Strom: Present Trustee Tim Moore: Present

Trustee Eric Wasowicz: Present Committee Chair Veronica Herrero: Present

Also present were President Lisa Freeman; Committee Liaison and Vice President for Research and Innovation Partnerships Yvonne Harris; Vice President and General Counsel and Board Parliamentarian Bryan Perry; Interim Executive Vice President and Provost Laurie Elish-Piper; Chief Strategy Officer and Liaison to the Board of Trustees Matt Streb; and University Advisory Committee Member Bradrick Cripe.

VERIFICATION OF QUORUM AND APPROPRIATE NOTICE OF PUBLIC MEETING

General Counsel Bryan Perry indicated the appropriate notification of the meeting had been provided pursuant to the Illinois Open Meetings Act. Mr. Perry also advised that a quorum was present.

MEETING AGENDA APPROVAL

Committee Chair Herrero asked for a motion to approve the meeting agenda. Committee Vice Chair Athas so moved, and Trustee Strom seconded. The motion was approved.

REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF NOVEMBER 9, 2023

Committee Chair Herrero asked for a motion to approve the minutes of November 9, 2023. Trustee Wasowicz so moved, and Trustee Barsema seconded. The motion was approved.

CHAIR'S COMMENTS/ANNOUNCEMENTS

Committee Chair Herrero welcomed University Advisory Committee Members and opened the floor to remarks. Committee Member Bradrick Cripe extended thanks and appreciation to the Office of Sponsored Programs Administration for including the information about all of the projects and research noting how vital this money is for faculty and recognizing the research, collaboration and work they do. Committee Chair Herrero welcomed all other members and shared appreciation for Dara Little and the work her office is doing along with her amazement at the continued trend of increased funding from state and federal sources. She noted that VP Harris will highlight information about the funding and awards. Bryan Flower from the Office of Innovation will give a presentation involving a partnership between Commonwealth Edison, NIU, and the Electric Power Research Institute. Together the collaborators grow healthy food all year

round and contribute to our regional food sustainability goals. Committee Chair Herrero points to the awards and recognition we will hear about and notes the importance of NIU developing the pipeline and research from both faculty and students.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Committee Chair Herrero introduced the public comment portion of the meeting. General Counsel Bryan Perry confirmed that no public comments were received.

UNIVERSITY REPORTS

Committee Chair Herrero asked Vice President for Research and Innovation Partnerships Yvonne Harris, to provide an update from the Division of Research and Innovation Partnerships.

Vice President Harris acknowledged another strong quarter of research funding noting that growth is steady with \$11.2M for research, \$5.5M for instruction, and \$5.2M for other sponsored activities research. Compared to the same period last year, research funding increased by 16%, instructional funding increased by 31%. Due to delays executing Illinois contracts, funding for other sponsored activities is down.

Vice President Harris mentioned that NIU continues to be recognized for its excellence in research and shared that the Department of Energy (DOE) has recognized Physics Professor, Bela Erdelyi, who will receive \$600K over three years to study a new type of particle accelerator that will be used in discovery science. Spencer Kelham, NIU Physics graduate student was also recognized as one of sixty students across the United States who received a competitive and prestigious award for having potential to make important contributions to the mission of DOE sciences. He will receive a stipend and begin work at Argonne National Laboratory full time using electro optic based diagnostic tools to analyze particle beams.

Vice President Harris also recognized Biological Sciences Associate Professor, Dr. Jennifer Koop for receipt of a faculty early career development grant of \$1.2M over five years from the National Science Foundation for research that involves investigating why some species have invaded certain habitats. Findings from this research could develop management practices aimed at reducing the negative impact of invasive species on the environment. The most exciting part of this research is the collaborative partnerships that will be formed between graduate, undergraduate and STEM students from Clinton Rosette Middle School in DeKalb through mentoring.

Noting that NIU is not only known for outstanding work in science, but also social justice, Vice President Harris shared that Professor Zachary Wahl and Associate Professor Jen Jacobs from the College of Education have been awarded \$2.55M by the Illinois Department of Juvenile Justice for Project FLEX. This is a program that leverages the power of sports to change the lives of incarcerated youth. FLEX implements evidence based programming based on physical and mental health, character development and improved access to higher education with a goal to reduce recidivism.

Agenda Item 7.a. – State Legislative Report

Katie Davison joined virtually to provide updates to the written report. She shared that the general assembly reconvened for the 2024 spring session on January 16 and that Friday, February 9 was the deadline for bill introduction. She mentioned that work is underway to identify all bills related to higher education that will come before the general assembly this spring. Katie noted that

budget negotiations at the state house are underway in preparation for the Governor's Budget address on February 21 and that she anticipates we will see the tightest budget we've seen in some time due to lower than projected revenues and increased demands on spending. She is preparing for NIU Senate and house appropriations hearings to outline our needs and highlight our impact, these should take place in March.

We are also planning for our third NIU Advocacy Day that will take place in Springfield on March 5 in partnership with the NIU Alumni Association. This event is to demonstrate the strength and unity of our NIU network and reinforce the impact NIU has on our students, graduates and throughout Illinois.

The Illinois Primary Elections will take place on Tuesday, March 19. Locally, Representative Lance Yednock will not be seeking a bid for reelection and the primary race for district 76 has three candidates in the Democrat race (DeKalb Mayor Cohen Barnes, Amy "Murri" Briel, Carolyn "Morris" Zasada) and two candidates in the republican race (Liz Bishop and Crystal Loughran).

Agenda Item 7.b. Federal Relations Report

Ms. Julia Rowe joined virtually to present updates to the Federal Relations Report. Starting with the congressional update on appropriations, Julia noted negotiations for a fully funded measure are still ongoing with The President's Budget Request expected to be released on March 9 for FY25. Congress continues to be focused on boarder security and a foreign aid funding package. The President's Alliance (NIU is a member) encouraged Congress to include DACA protections in any changes to boarder policy. On December 16, the House passed the DETERRENT Act pertaining to foreign gift reporting. The bill has not moved to the Senate floor. Also in December, the House Education and Workforce Committee moved the Bipartisan Workforce Pell Act out of Committee. The House marked up and moved forward the College Cost Reeducation Act introduced by Chairwoman Virginia Foxx on January 11. The bill aims to focus on accountability, transparency, and affordability measures. Prior to the markup on January 31, ranking member Bobby Scott of Virginia introduced a package of seven bills called The Roadmap to College Success which would double the Pell Grant to \$14K, expand the Pell program to graduate schools and waive tuition and fees for two-year community college programs. We do not believe these bills will become law this year. On February 4, the Department of Education sent the Title IX rule for review. This could take up to 90 days. The new FAFSA form was released on December 31 and there were widespread delays and issues logging into and completing the form. Sol Jensen, Vice President for Enrollment Management, Marketing and Communications shared that while we have no updates for when we will have financial information and data coming back to us from students who have completed the FAFSA, we are working closely with students, staff and families to encourage continuous applications without delay. Vice President Jensen shared there will be differences in the FAFSA for students who apply coming from families who own small businesses or farmland. In alignment with ISAC as the MAP Grant deadlines moved to April 1, NIU made the decision to push back our priority deadlines for programs. We are continually offering services to help students complete the FAFSA and note that across the country there will be more students eligible for aid. President Freeman added that the national higher education organizations have been clear to bring communities of Chancellors and Presidents together to point out the Department of Education has indicated there is latitude during this transition period for offices of financial aid to look at individual students and make decisions that will allow them to stay in school. Committee Vice Chair Athas asked how the expansion of the Pell Grants to online or for-profit institutions may

impact more traditional programs. Ms. Rowe responded there will be more applications and more student eligibility. The increase in applications and eligibility is not linked to added funding.

Agenda Item 7.c. Sponsored Programs Administration Quarterly Report

The Committee reviewed the sponsored programs administration quarterly written report submitted by Ms. Dara Little, Associate Vice President for Research/Executive Director Sponsored Programs. The report shows that NIU received 109 sponsored awards totaling \$8.3M to bring the cumulative FY24 activity to 172 sponsored awards totaling \$21.9M. \$11.2M for research, \$5.5M for instruction, and \$5.2M for other sponsored activities. This indicates research funding increased over the same period last year and that funding is currently down in other sponsored activities. NIU's sponsored funding portfolio continues to show signs of steady growth with federal and state funds comprising most of the funding portfolio.

Agenda Item 7.d. – Northern Illinois University Edible Campus Program and Example of Food Systems Innovation Collaborations Presentations

Bryan Flower, Assistant Director of Food Systems Innovation with the Department of Innovation, gave a presentation showcasing the NIU Edible Campus evolution. He shared collaborative efforts between NIU Office of Innovation and Office of Outreach and External Research Development. The program aims to reconnect students with health and wellness and understanding of our food systems. Bryan continues to work alongside Sustainability Coordinator Courtney Gallaher with the hope of meeting the campus sustainability and food insecurity issues. Another goal was to make the program self-sustaining at the conclusion of initial funding. State and local businesses combined to donate tools, raised beds, seeds and soil. Recognizing that we needed to grow a diverse group of foods, Bryan expanded efforts of the program to include organic standards and employ an integrated pest management system along with a five zone irrigation system with moisture sensing capabilities to allow us to be more sustainable. Workshops were developed for students and students with disabilities to learn about composting, planting and food. Later, hydroponic towers were added and a hydro pod (from EPRI) for indoor food production. Using these units will allow research to guide food production to be used in food deserts or areas with food scarcity. At the conclusion of the 15 months of food production and research, we will be allowed to keep the unit and share the data. Professor Dr. Beth Gaillard will partner with Bryan using the MAC lab to determine nutrient density of the food produced from these units. All produce grown across the program initiatives goes back to students through the Huskie Food Pantry and NIU dining. Future initiatives include nut and berry production and offering a vegetarian/vegan production for dining. President Freeman added that we plan to partner with community colleges to offer pathways for food systems sustainability. Trustees thanked Bryan for the presentation.

OTHER MATTERS

Committee Chair Herrero asked if there were other matters to come before the Committee. The Committee confirmed that there were no other matters to be discussed.

NEXT MEETING DATE

Committee Chair Herrero noted that the next meeting will be held on May 9, 2024.

ADJOURNMENT

Committee Chair Herrero asked for a motion to adjourn. Trustee Wasowicz so moved, and Board Chair Gayles seconded. The motion was approved.

Committee Chair Herrero asked Ms. Jurs-Lauderdale to conduct a roll call vote.

Committee Vice Chair Rita Athas: Present Trustee Dennis Barsema: Present

Trustee John Butler: Present Board Chair Montel Gayles: Present

Trustee Tim Moore: Present Trustee Leland Strom: Present

Trustee Eric Wasowicz: Present Committee Chair Veronica Herrero: Present

The motion was approved.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:27 a.m.

Rachel Jurs-Lauderdale

Recording Secretary

In compliance with Illinois Open Meetings Act 5 ILCS 120/1, et seq, a verbatim record of all Northern Illinois University Board of Trustees meetings is maintained by the Board Recording Secretary and is available for review upon request. The minutes contained herein represent a true and accurate summary of the Board proceedings.