

Minutes of the
NIU Board of Trustees
**ACADEMIC AFFAIRS, STUDENT AFFAIRS
AND PERSONNEL COMMITTEE**
November 10, 2011

CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

The meeting was called to order by Chair Cheryl Murer at 9:01 a.m. in the Board of Trustees room, 315 Altgeld Hall. Recording Secretary Sharon Banks-Wilkins conducted a roll call of Trustees. Members present were Trustees Robert Boey, John Butler, Robert Marshall, Student Trustee Jaemin Robertson and Chair Cheryl Murer. Also present were Trustee Anthony Iosco, committee Liaison Ray Alden, President John Peters and Board General Counsel Jerry Blakemore. With a quorum present, the meeting proceeded.

VERIFICATION OF APPROPRIATE NOTICE OF PUBLIC MEETING

Confirmation of Open Meetings Act public notice compliance was provided by Board General Counsel Jerry Blakemore.

MEETING AGENDA APPROVAL

On reviewing the agenda, Chair Murer said, Provost Alden and I thought the agenda items should be reordered so that we can begin with the broadest issue. The Chair then asked for a motion to approve the committee agenda as follows: 7.a., Higher Learning Commission Accreditation; 7.b., Oversight of Academic Programs; and 7.c., Request for a New Center. Trustee Boey made the motion to approve the meeting agenda as amended. Trustee Marshall seconded the motion. The motion was approved.

REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF MINUTES

It was moved by Trustee Marshall and seconded by Trustee Butler to approve the minutes of the August 25, 2011 Academic Affairs, Student Affairs and Personnel Committee Meeting. The motion was approved.

CHAIR'S COMMENTS/ANNOUNCEMENTS

Good morning everyone, Chair Murer said, this is the first meeting of the fall session for the Academic Affairs, Student Affairs and Personnel Committee. She then welcomed the University Advisory Committee representatives, Dr. Kerry Freedman and Mr. Andy Small. Dr. Freeman commended the work of the people at the P-20 Center for doing a wonderful job over the years, and especially for highlighting arts education. Mr. Small welcomed the Trustees back for another academic year.

We are embarking on a very critical two-year accreditation process that will result in a 2014 site visit by the Higher Learning Commission (HLC), Chair Murer stated, one of the six regional accrediting bodies of institutions of higher learning in the United States. Our last accreditation process was in 2004. This comprehensive review happens every ten years, so we decided to reorder the agenda items in order to begin with the accreditation process. In my call with the Provost and Dr. Cassidy, I asked, "What is the tempo of the university in regards to this? Is this the accreditation which happens every ten years? Is it being viewed with trepidation? Or is it being embraced?" Of course they gave me the answer I was looking for. But the fact of the matter is that we should look at this as a wonderful opportunity because it is interfacing and interjecting with our strategic plan. This accreditation process could not come at a better time than when we have launched Vision 2020. For those of you who have gone through this process before, we, for whom this might be the first time, look to your leadership. This is important so

that we have consistency of our academic programming, our academic reporting, as well as interfacing with our strategic plan. In light of this, I would like to introduce one of the individuals who is taking a leadership role, Dr. Doris Macdonald from the Department of English.

One of the key roles of the steering committee will be to provide evidence demonstrating how NIU meets each of the five criteria for accreditation: mission, integrity, academic programs of quality resources and support, academic programs of evaluation and improvement, and resources and planning. It is interesting that we begin with mission as one of the keys to the accreditation process because the reidentification of mission in our strategic plan is certainly at the forefront of any thought process we might have.

As this Board knows, President Peters and the university have worked diligently over the last year to develop the Vision 2020 Initiative. This Board has eagerly supported that function. With the upcoming reaccreditation, the new standards set by the HLC revolve extensively around the mission of the institution. We have not updated our mission statement since 1991 and, obviously, many things have taken place since 1991. I have spoken with both President Peters and Provost Alden about the dated nature of our mission statement. Given the emphasis that we have on the mission statement through the accreditation process, combined with the future direction and course laid out for Vision 2020, I would like to ask that President Peters and Provost Alden lead an effort to update the NIU Mission Statement for Board review and approval. I plan to bring a resolution to that effect to this Board at the December 1 meeting, and ask that Provost Alden address this issue in more detail during his report to the committee about the Higher Learning Commission accreditation process.

Often we see a mission statement as a grouping of words that have merit in its language, but do not necessarily see an effectuation in day-to-day operations. That is the nature of mission statements, very global. This is the time for us to reflect, what is the mission of Northern Illinois University? Where do we want to see the lifeblood of this university go in the next decade? The President is viewing this as one of the key elements in the next two to ten years. So it is important that we take time to reflect upon this mission statement and make it the thing that will distinguish NIU from other universities.

The second item in the University Report this morning is an information item about the oversight of our academic programs. In this era of increased accountability, the importance of a rigorous program review process is paramount.

Finally, our committee will be asked to approve the creation of a Center for P-20 Engagement. It is imperative that we continue to build strong bridges between NIU and the P-12 schools to advance the national educational targets and the IBHE Public Agenda within the state. NIU's Center for P-20 Engagement has existed as a temporary center since 2006. What makes it unique is that the center develops partnerships with school districts and coordinates our teacher education efforts across five NIU colleges. This is something that no other university in this state has done. This is an example of our mission, it is the manifestation of our commitment, and our commitment to students prior to coming to the university.

PUBLIC COMMENT

The Chair asked General Counsel Blakemore if any members of the public had registered a written request to address the Board in accordance with state law and Board of Trustees *Bylaws*. Mr. Blakemore noted that he had received no requests to address this meeting.

UNIVERSITY RECOMMENDATIONS/REPORTS

Agenda Item 7.a. – Higher Learning Commission Accreditation

In the life of any university that is accredited, and in order to attract students, Provost Alden said, you have to be accredited, in good standing. The reaccreditation process is a major event. It gives an

opportunity for an institution to look back on what it has been doing as well as look forward to what it will do in the future. We are in a very challenging time in that the Higher Learning Commission is only now reviewing and changing its criteria. We believe it will focus on mission because that is the latest version they have on the web, and I doubt that will change much, because one of the things we are seeing in higher education is not a focus on input, but on outcomes. It used to be that an accrediting body would come and count how many volumes you have in the library, how much you spend on various activities, how many faculty you have, and so forth. Now the focus is on, do you do what you say you are going to do and, obviously, that starts with the mission statement. No longer is it that if you read one mission statement or a number of them, they are all the same. They parse the words carefully because they want you to put your self-study in terms of the mission, and/so they can make sure that you are accomplishing your goals.

So, I think this is an incredibly important and opportune time for the university to look at what we have done in the past and where we are going in the future in the context of Vision 2020. We have selected a coordinator for the self-study, but this is a multiyear process that involves the entire university community. I would like to call upon Vice Provost Cassidy to explain a bit more about the timing and the activities that will be done in this process that will be led by a steering committee chaired by Dr. Macdonald.

We talk about our comprehensive visit as an event that occurs every ten years, Dr. Cassidy said, but we submit annual reports to the Higher Learning Commission. In addition, as we move our degree programs to various locations off campus, we have to seek their approval, and that is done twice a year. Those members of the Board of Trustees who were here last year may remember that we reported on a visit to our off-campus locations in Naperville, Rockford and Hoffman Estates, which is part of the requirement for our continuing accreditation with the HLC. We have initiated the steps for this comprehensive visit, as the Provost indicated. The President is in the process of appointing a steering committee. Our organizational meeting will be held in December, and we will begin the background work and gather information so that we can begin drafting responses to the criteria in spring 2012.

We will be using the process commonly implemented in institutions undergoing comprehensive accreditation. The steering committee is the core group, but each person on the steering committee will chair a subcommittee of faculty, staff and students who will help gather information, ask critical questions, analyze information, and identify the information that should go in our report to the HLC. Some other things we have done to facilitate communication about the process are developing a web site for the comprehensive visit that will include links to information that the HLC makes available to the public. Also on the web site will be information about the steering committee, its meeting schedule, agendas, minutes, etc. In addition, that site will serve as a communication vehicle for soliciting input from the campus community on drafts of the report in progress. Blackboard will facilitate communication by allowing us to post documents and reports and to make information available to all members of the steering committee as well. That will provide us with a very effective way of communicating, both with the campus community and among the individuals who are involved in developing the self-study. We are right on schedule with our timeline. Our plan is to have a report ready for campus review in the fall of 2013 so that it can be finalized and submitted to the Higher Learning Commission late in the fall semester in time for a site visit that will occur in spring of 2014. For our last visit, a team of ten individuals came to campus and met with every constituency – Board members, faculty, staff, students – in organized meetings and in open forums. They made visits to at least one of our off-campus locations, meetings were scheduled in every college and with various administrators. We had an evidence room where they could validate the information we included in our self-study as well as the information they gained from discussions with the campus constituencies.

I want to thank Professor Macdonald for taking on this task, President Peters said. I did these at Nebraska, and I know how it consumes you. But it is very important, and I am so pleased that you, as well as the other steering committee members, have taken this on, because this is a shared governance process to be sure. This is my seventh reaccreditation. Normally we look at these as an onerous task, but the accreditation of an institution of the quality of Northern Illinois University is not in doubt. In the

past decade, there has been a clamoring in Washington for more accountability of universities, and postsecondary education went large, particularly with the growth of for-profit institutions. The main protectors of the quality of programs we deliver in this country are the regional, mainline, old, accrediting agencies. As the Provost said, the focus was always on the number of books you had, the number of square feet you had per lab animal, the faculty pay, all of those measures that determined whether you could fulfill your mission. In the accountability era, this shifted and there was a threat within the past four or five years, through perhaps an agency or superagency and the Department of Education, to do away with regional accrediting and to put it in the federal government. This, in my opinion, would have been a disaster because then you would have a different kind of postsecondary system. In response to that, the regional accrediting agencies and the Higher Learning Commission are committed to switching to accountability and output measures. This is the first time they are doing this, and we take it extremely seriously. It is appropriate that the Trustees are challenging us to focus on the mission because everything is going to flow from that. We know what it is that we want to do, and now we have to align our mission statement with that. In terms of this mission statement, less will be better.

I am interested in hearing from the Provost and the President on the process that will be undertaken to form this mission, Trustee Butler remarked. It would be very challenging to formulate what I gather from prior discussions will be a rather succinct statement of something much more scaled down than the current mission we have. I am just curious on an intellectual level how you will achieve that, given so many interests, and how you will end up with an outcome that the major constituencies on campus feel has been impacted by them.

One of the things that has been discussed in some of the national organizations, Provost Alden said, is making meaningful, succinct mission statements that can be tied to certain student learning outcomes as well as community engagement outcomes. One of the things that the national organization in charge of outcomes assessments has done is taken some of the very broad lengthy mission statements, parsed them and said in order for this institution to show that they have been doing this entire mission, they will have to demonstrate dozens of distinct outcomes. Yet, there is another approach, and that is to make it succinct, but reflective of what we really value. Generally, mission statements these days are more in the nature of a paragraph or two, but they have meaning. It means engaged learning, it means engagement with our diverse constituencies in the region, it means valuing a diverse academic community, and so forth. That is the kind of language you are going to want to see in a succinct one- or two-paragraph statement. Rather than having a multipage mission statement where everybody puts in a sentence that they can feel is theirs, it is more of a challenge to design a couple of paragraphs that people can find home in and demonstrate how they are advancing those particular items in the mission statement. It is a challenge, because we are going to be held accountable for all the words we put on the page, which is why it is important that we make it as succinct as possible.

Say there are five elements in a simple statement that are value driven, core values, the President said, and engaged learning is made an argument. Then it is up to the constituency groups or the elements in the university to demonstrate how they fit engaged learning here at NIU. We have to ask the question across campus, what are people thinking out there and what is the best way to get there?

Our last mission statement was done in 2004, about eight years after the Board of Trustees was formed in 1996, Trustee Boey commented. It is hard to remember comparisons, but the one thing I remember is what the President and the Provost have pointed out today. I seem to remember that was a very long mission statement, and it was confusing. The mission statement of one or two paragraphs fits right in with my mentality from the business world. This whole plan of doing it is going to be an exciting change, and I am particularly looking forward to reading the new mission statement.

I have asked the President and the Provost to take the first stab at bringing together the language, Chair Murer stated, but it is the Board of Trustees, in its governance, that will look at this and ultimately assure that it is in keeping with the thoughts and wishes of the governance. My comment that this was cataclysmic is because we have this accreditation process at the very same time we are looking at our Mission Statement, Bylaws revisions and the implementation of the Vision 2020 Initiative. Those things have to mesh with all three on the same page. All I am asking is that the President and the Provost

initiate the process. Then it will be disseminated, certainly, to the Board of Trustees, but also to the stakeholders from which we will build consensus.

The one thing I learned in these reaccreditations, President Peters said, is that you must start with your last report identifying your weaknesses and demonstrate you have improved them. We had a very good, clean report and reaccreditation with the exception of issues identified in assessment. The issues that we had to address last time were about documentation related to assessment, Dr. Cassidy said, and practically before we got the report from the steering committee, we implemented some processes to address that. There were two areas of concern. One was in general education, and one was in graduate programs. We implemented an annual assessment update for all of our academic programs, so we have data for ten years on the assessment activities and how those data have been used to make decisions about programs to say yes, we are on target, we are doing the right things. Or, we are not doing as well in a particular area as we would like, so we need to have discussions and make curricular revisions, etc. We are also working on general education. There certainly is assessment going on in that area, and we will be able to address those concerns easily.

Agenda Item 7.b. – Oversight of Academic Programs

As Dr. Cassidy has indicated, reaccreditation is not the only opportunity we take to assess ourselves, Provost Alden stated. We have a number of cycles going on assessing what we are doing at the university. We have the annual reporting of assessment outcomes, led by Carolinda Douglass, who is in charge of our assessment center and leads the university-wide assessment panel. I see the reminders sent to all the programs that may be a little slow getting their reports in, and those reports are received from every academic program. On an eight-year cycle, our Academic Planning Council does a very thorough review, almost akin to a reaccreditation for those programs that go through specialized accreditation. Almost as intense as those specialized reaccreditations, it involves a self-study that takes two years for a program to put together. My office meets with them multiple times to make sure they have all the data needed and that they understand the reporting requirements. Then the Academic Planning Council (APC) breaks into subcommittees to look at each program intensively, and then the group as a whole looks at the program. It is like a hearing for each program where the dean, the chair, and in some cases, individual coordinators come and answer questions, and basically interact on how the program is doing. Some of these self-study reports, as well as the report of the APC, can go on for dozens of pages. What the IBHE sees, and you receive, are summaries of a very intensive process.

We do an internal review of our programs every eight years through the program review process, Dr. Cassidy said. Our reporting agency for this oversight process is the Illinois Board of Higher Education, and this schedule is codified in the IBHE regulations. In your report, you can see the listing of the 13 programs and one center we reviewed in the 2010-2011 Academic Year. When the report is sent to the IBHE, we also send the summaries of the programs to the Board of Trustees. In addition, we have given you more information about the context in which that occurs because it is not an isolated or a singular process. We have multiple processes in place that are ongoing and systematic for the oversight of our programs. In addition to the annual assessment updates that come from each of the academic programs every year, we have another shared governance group called the University Assessment Panel that reviews assessment plans and looks at the findings from the assessment activities that have occurred in those programs.

In addition, for our doctoral programs, we implemented a process of external reviews, which is done in conjunction with program review, and the program review report is the basis for the information we send to external reviewers. So, while those doctoral departments are undergoing program review, we bring two external evaluators to campus for about two days. We send them extensive documentation to review for us and a set of questions to which we would like them to respond. They come to campus in a way similar to accreditation where they meet with every constituency – faculty, staff, students, administration – and provide a short oral report to us at the end of their visit. They then submit written documentation of their visit findings. For our doctoral dissertations, which are the culminating research products our Ph.D. and Ed.D. graduates prepare, we have an external process for evaluating samples of those dissertations as well as a process that has been implemented by the graduate school for some

internal oversight by having a person who is external to the department assisting the student in developing his/her research project and report and the defense of their research. So those two processes dovetail.

Another aspect of program oversight comes from advisory committees. With rare exception, every program has some sort of an external advisory committee comprised of, many times, alumni as well as individuals who are involved in hiring our graduates. They help to inform the faculty and the chairs of the programs about what is going on in the workplace, how well our students are performing and where they may need some additional content or experience with certain elements of the discipline. We are involved in multidimensional processes of program oversight, and program review is just one of those processes.

The first question I would normally ask is, are we ready for this, Trustee Marshall commented. When I look back over the last few years, I have to answer with a resounding yes. One of the particular reasons is that, going beyond mandated reports, you have initiatives by the university such as the Strategic Plan Task Force and the Vision 2020 Initiative.

It is very important for us to promote internships, externships, law clerk-ships, depending on the school involved, Trustee Iosco remarked. I have worked very hard, along with some of my colleagues in the Circuit Court of Cook County, to get some of our law students working in courtrooms, helping judges, whether it is researching the law, helping prepare court orders, or just helping in litigation. A very important aspect of this review is to showcase what the various alums and members of the faculty are doing to help get students to the next step. We do an excellent job of the academic education, but it is important to get them oriented into the actual day-to-day aspects of their professions, whether it is law or accountancy.

Agenda Item 7.c. – Request for a New Center

Actually, the Provost said, this is not a new center. The IBHE process allows a center to be named as a temporary center for five years, to see if it is going to be productive, and this center has been very productive. It is a major part of our outreach and engagement to the school districts in our region. It is the P-20 Engagement Center, formerly known as the Center for Educational Policy, Research and Services. The P-20 Center is engaged in a number of activities. Vice President Anne Kaplan and Deputy Provost Gip Seaver are codirectors of the center. Vice President Kaplan has provided you just some of the more current activities they are involved in. This summer I had the opportunity to go to the new DeKalb High School and listen to presentations by our faculty and the teachers from DeKalb High School about all the great things they are doing with the professional development schools concept. This is an opportunity for us to provide our research, knowledge and experience to the school systems. But also, it is so our students can be in school systems that are in partnership with us to engage them in student teaching before they become certified as teachers. We go with them and help the school systems become more rigorous and more informed by current research. Also, this P-20 Center is seen as providing an interest to community members in things like STEM areas. STEMfest has been very successful bringing in thousands of community members and, hopefully, students of the future, to become interested in Science, Technology, Engineering and Math. Chair Murer asked for a motion to approve the Request for a new Center, to be known as the P-20 Engagement Center. Trustee Boey so moved, seconded by Trustee Butler. The motion was approved.

NEXT MEETING DATE

The Chair announced that the next meeting of the Academic Affairs, Student Affairs and Personnel Committee would be announced at the meeting of the full Board on December 1.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no Other Matters, Chair Murer asked for a motion to adjourn. Trustee Boey so moved, seconded by Trustee Butler. The motion was approved. The meeting was adjourned at approximately 9:56 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Sharon M. Banks-Wilkins
Recording Secretary