Minutes of the
NIU Board of Trustees
Of Northern Illinois University
Special Meeting
September 16, 2015

CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

The meeting was called to order at 2:03 p.m. by Chair Marc Strauss in the Board of Trustees Room, 315 Altgeld Hall. Recording Secretary Kathleen Carey conducted a roll call. Members present were Trustees Robert Boey, John Butler, Robert Marshall, Raquel Chavez, and Board Chair Marc Strauss. Trustees Cherilyn Murer and Wheeler Coleman were absent. Also present: Mike Mann, Jerry Blakemore, Doug Baker, Abby Dean, Jennice O'Brien, Al Phillips, Eric Weldy, Anne Kaplan, Lisa Freeman, UAC Representatives – Greg Long, Faculty Senate, Deb Haliczer, Supportive Professional Staff.

VERIFICATION OF QUORUM AND APPROPRIATE NOTICE OF PUBLIC MEETING

General Counsel Blakemore indicated the appropriate notification of the meeting has been provided pursuant to the Illinois Open Meetings Act. With a quorum present, the meeting proceeded.

MEETING AGENDA APPROVAL

Chair Strauss asked for a motion to approve the meeting agenda. Trustee Boey so moved and Trustee Butler seconded. The motion was approved.

CHAIR'S COMMENTS/ANNOUNCEMENTS

Chair Strauss began, I'll be very brief in my comments. Today is an opportunity for my colleagues on the Board to be able to be brought up to date on items that were presented to a strategic planning session that I had the privilege of attending earlier this year. You've been provided with the background materials and although I don't expect we'll get through every slide today, we'll at least have a summary. I am confident this will provide some background information that will inform our discussions tomorrow and over the coming year. I am thankful that you all were able to make the appropriate commitment to get here for this special meeting as I believe that it's important that we receive this information.

Greg Long responded, I would just like to say I appreciate the opportunity to be involved as Faculty Senate President and Executive Secretary of University Council and look forward to any opportunities that we can provide support and information for you.

Deborah Haliczer added, same goes for SPS and Operating Staff Council. We always appreciate being involved.

PUBLIC COMMENT

General Counsel Blakemore indicated that there were no request for public comment. Chair Strauss recognized the University Advisor Committee representatives present including Greg Long and Deborah Halizer.

UNIVERSITY REPORT

President Baker began, two years ago we started a strategic planning process and we've begun its implementation over the last year. In these last two years we've had a strategic planning retreat in the summer followed up by a leadership retreat in the fall. About 150 people attended from Department

Chairs up and middle level supervisors on up. Abby Dean and Jennice O'Brien from Marketing co-presented and Dani Rollins from Admissions presented. So what I'd like to do today is give you an overview of what we did that day and show you the context of what we're trying to do with the leadership team, what's the situation, what were the actions that had been taken, what are we doing now and what effects we're seeing. It was a good day and we really rallied a lot of spirit and focus. I appreciate Chair Strauss being able to attend. First we gave a lay of the land; where we are from a state budget perspective, an enrollment perspective, and then, the enrollment issues. The PowerPoint slides will show what we covered to give you a context for what we're doing with the leadership team.

Baker continued, the strategic plan triangle or the triangle offense that we talk about with students, faculty and the outside world hook together in the triangle supported by the services. A prominent and recent example is our work in Rockford announcing three bachelors and one master's degree jointly taught on the Rock Valley Campus. We did that because we joined up with people in the community, industry including Woodward who is going to provide capital assets to do remodeling in the facilities; Rock Valley that's going to give us the space to teach it in free, and internships with industry. So the triangle came together to make it possible.

Baker added, interestingly, many in the leadership team didn't have a complete picture of what the state budget looked like, so we needed to give them at least that macro level view of the budget and the $31.5 billion dollar budget from last year. If you pull education out of that $31 billion budget, which is $1.2 billion out of the $31 plus billion of the state; and we've seen that the governor suggested a 31.5% budget reduction. The General Assembly proposed an 8.6% budget cut, but that left the state $4 billion deficit so now we've got to figure out where to go, and whether to reduce appropriations or raise revenues. This slide shows Illinois increased appropriations to cover unfunded pension programs. This slide shows the educational appropriations per FTE student in the state and how it's changed over the last five years and it shows Illinois being one of three states that had an increase in appropriations to higher education and in our case the highest in the country. How could that possibly happen when our appropriations are going down? The answer is in kind. It's the pension payments that are driving it up while our operating budgets are driving down.

Baker continued, the next slide shows enrollment changes by state. It's an interesting contrast. It shows an 18% plus decrease in enrollment over the last five years in public institutions and that's Illinois. So we've had the biggest decrease in higher education enrollments in the country over that same five year period that money went in at a high level, but to pensions. In the green are the in kind payments, the employee fringe benefits and insurance retirement, and the red is the operating budget. So while we're trying to run universities in the state on the red lines, the green lines are the pensions and they're trying to catch up to pension programs that are in arrears. In 2002, we had $118 million appropriation at Northern Illinois University and if you adjust for inflation and the cuts, we're about half of that today. We've lost half of our disposable, spendable appropriations. To help offset that we, as most institutions, have increased tuition. Tuition revenue went up and state appropriations went down. If you add those two lines together, we're actually $21 million lower in spendable operating budgets than we were 12 years ago. Tuition revenue is a function of tuition rate times enrollment, and here's the enrollment slide over the last ten years, twelve years. It shows that it's been going down more than 15 almost 18%; so a long slide and that's something we've got to turn around. This correlates to many things, but one of them is tuition increases so the supply and demand curves worked again. You increase price, you reduce the amount of sales, so to speak; it drives students out. It makes it harder for them to come and stay. There are many other things that correlate with this too, like our efforts in recruitment and marketing, etc. which we're turning around at this point.

This chart is fall to fall reenrollment or our retention rate. Comparing five years ago, 2009, to this year, we have the second highest retention rate we've had in the last five years and it's better than the last four, so we're seeing progress. Many of the steps we took this spring in terms of calling of students, working on financial aid, etc. helped reshape that curve. I'm very appreciative of the faculty and staff at the university for all the work that they did contacting students, going through orientations, facilitating, advising, etc., it made a difference. We think that might have been responsible for 300 students coming back to school that wouldn't have. The fall enrollments the last three years all have the same shape, around 20,000, or 21,230 to be exact, which is about a 2.3% decrease. Better than we expected and better than we predicted. In the middle of the winter when we started taking some very aggressive steps to turn around with recruitment and retention efforts.

Baker continued, this slides shows our operating budget by source. Our auxiliary services are things that we can't spend on other items as it is paying for our housing bonds and auxiliary services. These are non-fungible assets we can't move over into the operating budget. The operating budget has two major components, one is state appropriations and tuition and fee revenue, or income revenue. If you would have looked at this chart a decade ago, amounts would be flipped in their proportions, that the state paid more than tuition and it is now flipped because we've raised tuition and had budget cuts from that state. That figure was $426 million which was last year's total budget. Here is the preliminary budget showing we will need to balance the budget by reducing our expenditures significantly. We've cut $20 million so far and we've got more to go. The next chart is how we spend our money with Academic Affairs as a large part; operations, central services, utilities; and then all the other various pieces which are much smaller.

Trustee Butler asked what is included in executive office.

Baker responded, that's my office, so it would everything inside of my office including internal audit, administrative staff, and support of the trustees. Sometimes people are surprised how small things like athletics and advancement are. They think that they would be much bigger pieces of the pie. We need to build a sustainable budget and there are more expenditures than revenue because of the cuts we've had and because of not reducing spending in the last decade. We need to increase our efficiencies, we need to control our spending and we need to build revenue. The procurement map shows 74 potential steps if you are going to buy something which is too long. We are working on mapping and revamping that. There are many other areas in the university that could do that to make all of our lives simpler and more efficient and increase morale, efficiency and effectiveness. With the budget process we anticipate reductions and revenue at this time. Last summer was a $37 million reduction which is about ten percent reduction in the level of operating funds. As a result, each of the divisions applied a ten percent reduction, some divisions above and some divisions below that by a few percentage points depending on the area and how much we could take out of them without doing serious harm. Through the summer we met with all the divisional leaders and we're getting pretty close to finishing but we're still waiting on a state budget. We're budgeting without the state budget piece in place and we're having to do it with our tuition revenues and other revenues that we can pull together. We need to put a process in play that looks out a number of years and not just try to solve a one year budget problem. We probably can't take care of everything we need to take care of in one year. We have to look out over multiple years. Vice President Phillips is looking at trying to build multi-year budgets so there's some predictability in for projects that take more than one year. We are working on program prioritization including procurement and others. We need to build our enrollments and we need to continue to address and resolve the funding issues and challenges that we have going forward. The part that we have the most control over in terms of our revenue is enrollment, whether it be recruitment or retention.

Baker continued, this is a conceptual model that we used. At the top of the model are all the niches that we have going into the enrollment funnel. So those could be freshmen, transfers, non-traditional students, business to business students, meaning we offer classes to businesses not individuals where we might have the same in-house MBA program at a corporation, or in-house law program held in a firm, continuing training, graduate programs, on-line programs, and honors. One of our bright statistics this year was a 31 percent increase in our incoming honors class, an additional 99 students. That correlated with our increases in ACT, GPA, and class ranking that were all up this year, something we'd worked to improve.

We've got all the niches coming in and then they go through the funnel from prospect, inquiry, applicant, admit, confirmed, and enrolled. We need to do a variety of things at each step and different places in the organization are going to play bigger or lesser roles in each of those. We wanted this as a conceptual model for the 150 leaders of the university to come together and figure out where am I and where can I affect the success in this funnel.

Baker continued, next we will look at Admissions. We hired Dani Rollins as the new director and when she arrived she had 30 full time staff and 65 student staff who are giving walking tours across campus, talking to people and doing orientations. Annual averages of applicant per year is about 26,000, with 60,000 supporting documents, and 13,000 perspective student visitors. They get six walk-in appointments a day, 68,000 outbound calls, 350 high school visits and 500 college fair and campus presentations. So a lot of activity and with a pretty thin staff. In fact, one of the things she talked about were the challenges of six admissions directors in six years, and many of them temporary. So it's pretty hard to build relationships around campus and partnerships on recruitment, if there's somebody new each year. It's pretty hard to build a trained staff to do anything when you've got that much turn over; and that is what she's inherited. Ms. Rollins brought a lot of stability to the office by addressing the staff turn-over, morale issues, and decentralization because the central function was not working so everybody out in the decentralized units were doing their own thing. There was no professional development for the staff and some mistrust of admissions. She's come in and really transformed that picture in a fairly short period of time. Some challenges included, the department was down two associate directors, nine processing staff, five admissions counselors, and people weren't in the right chairs doing the right stuff. People were frustrated, low morale, decentralization, mistrust, poor communication, and some image issues in the market. This presented an uphill battle but a real opportunity to transform and that's how she's taking it on and she's doing it fairly quickly. In addition, the Lipman Hearne contract helped reshape the retention and recruitment curve that I showed you earlier. At the point of inflection in summer things started going up, that's when the impact of that work started so we think that had a very positive impact and shifted that curve. That helped Dani think about some important things we need to do ongoing.

Baker noted, the Angel Touch program was one of those things. We found that there were a number of students that did not come back to school because of a fairly small amount of money, under a couple thousand dollars, but they couldn't return because they had that bill due. The Foundation and others stepped up. The Foundation could identify some money to help at that level. They identified 111 students that were eligible to return but could not come back due to a bill of under $2,000, and of those 111 students, 86 came back to school. We changed 86 lives for a couple thousand dollars. That's impressive and I really appreciate how fast that came together. One of the stories that Catherine tells is that we sent out a Fed-Ex to these 111 students and one showed up at this house and this mom saw it laying there and she called her son and said what did you do? What did you do now? You got a thing from NIU and it's a Fed-Ex, and he said, I don't know, open it. She opened it and started crying and said they're going to pay your debt. Turn around the car right now and go to DeKalb. So he did. He's back in class. That's the kind of impact it had. It was an angel's touch for a lot of these students, for 86 students. Looking at scholarships, looking at new leads, looking at specific programs that we wanted to focus on and really focused calling campaigns to help us with both recruitment and retention in pools of students we had not been contacting before. We sent out over 600,000 e-mails and 140,000 postcards to do that work. This is laborious work, but it paid dividends. Lipman Hearne's contract ran out at the end of June. Moving forward, here's the new Admissions office. They're focusing on efficiency and accuracy, and recruitment and development of talented staff. This summer Dani ran a multi-day training for the staff for the first time ever. It is critically important for her staff to know what they're doing from recruitment on through processing and out into the institution, so they got to feel up and down the continuum or the funnel about who is doing what; they learn from each other, they learned where we're headed, why we're doing it and how to better present the institution. We saw there a lot of spirit and energy. We will continue the training on authentic communications, teaching people about internal and external constituencies, and customer service. Deb Haliczer has been helping us with customer service around the institution doing training not just in admissions, but everywhere because we're all about recruitment and retention. So I appreciate her on-going work there and then the access to information.

Trustee Butler asked whether the specific challenges were addressed. Have we filled the associate director positions, the processing staff positions, and admissions counselors?

Vice President Weldy responded, yes, we merged the two associate director positions to one and we have that person overseeing processing and supervising. There was another associate director position that was filled, to oversee all of the programming, the call center for admissions and the focus as well on the customer service piece. The final associate director position we have not yet filled, but we are in that process now and that person will focus in on our communications piece. In the past we've had one person who basically oversaw our CRM system, our connect system, and that's created by Hobsons, and so we didn't have someone who had the expertise to oversee our communication system. We are in the position of hiring a CRM analyst who has the expertise that we need. Another thing that we did is that we started cross-training our staff so that there's not just one person who's familiar with our CRM system, but we have a number of individuals within admissions. We also brought in Hobsons to help clean up our CRM system and that was very helpful. In fact we did such a great job in cleaning it up that Hobsons invited Dani Rollins and Crystal Garvey to a conference in Texas to present to campuses, colleges and Universities around the country who have Hobsons to get a better understanding of the approach that we used to clean up our system

President Baker continued, this summer alone, we sent 600,000 emails so if you can, imagine the logistical challenge of keeping track of who all those people are and who you sent what at what time, and then based on how they responded, what you send them next, and based on how they responded to that what you send next. Based on what clicks they've come into the computer, the web system and click there what you do next; it's really a complex thing. That's what the Constituent Relations Management system does, the CRM. It's this big, complex computer program that, if not run well, runs amok, and when it runs amok you find parents in DeKalb or Sycamore who say I've got a 4.0 student who never heard from the university, what's going on? You really need a highly sophisticated system with skilled people running it and we haven't had that in the past. But we are paper thin in that area, thus some of the hiring. I will note that I've asked Eric and Dani to go back and look at their structure. Are we at the right staffing level? Could we get a lot more enrollment if we had more staff in critical areas? So they've recently come back to me with a list of what we would have in a perfect world and they are now working on the ROI for each one of those. How many students would we get if we actually hired that person to be a recruiter in downtown Chicago or another CRM person or a processing person? In processing, they're also doing cross-training because we get a wave of applications. If you have to deal with 26,000 applications and they sit there for weeks and weeks and they don't hear from us but they hear from other schools, we're getting left behind. So we've got all these pieces to figure out how to invest and make efficient and make our systems work.

Trustee Marshall asked what student worker currently do and how it has changed from the past. Also, would it benefit us to expand our student workers?

Vice President Weldy responded yes, Dani and I have had a number of conversations in regards to our student workers. We did increase the number of student ambassadors that we have in Admissions; and student ambassadors from the standpoint of giving tours. They are also responsible for assisting with any kind of activities, admission activities that we have such as open houses and so forth, they help us in the planning and working through and hosting perspective students and families and the call center. Any calls that go out from admissions and any calls we receive, we have student workers that are trained to be able to address any questions that perspective students and parents may have. We are also talking to student leaders of the student organizations who have an interest in assisting Admissions with recruitment, about how they can assist us. We have a number of students that go out to their high schools and meet with other students and their former teachers to talk about their experience here at NIU and so we provide proper training to go and be able to speak about NIU, and it also give us the opportunity to have a staff member accompany them on their visits. These are just a few of the things that we're doing. We would not be able to recruit students if it were not for students helping in that process.

President Baker added, many of our cultural centers are very active in recruiting too. The Latino Center, for example, does a great job bringing students to campus and touring them through the Latino Center and interfacing with the Admissions Office so they get the full campus tours. That's very helpful both for freshmen as well as transfer students.

Trustee Butler asked, when we look at 26,000 applications, 13,000 perspective student visitors, are there metrics that are industry standard that we would be able to put up against the numbers that we're looking at? Would someone like Ms. Rollins have come in and looked at those numbers and thought well this is how many people you have at the tenth day, here's how far you have to go before you're at the industry standard, operational capacity or where you should be for your size, etc.?

Vice President Weldy replied yes, in fact we've had a number of conversations in regards to national standards as it relates to admissions. For example, the CRM analyst position over the past several years we've had one person overseeing that. An institution our size usually has about three individual CRM analysts working within the system full time. We're definitely aware of our competition, where they're at in regards to staffing, and where we are in regards to staffing.

Trustee Butler responded, what about actual applications numbers?

President Baker responded, along the funnel for our size institution do we have enough applicants at the top and do we have the right yield rate down through. The answer is no and no. So at the top we've probably not been buying the names of enough students from ACT and other places where you purchase these names and addresses. So we've expanded our purchasing and we're continuing to look at how far we want to purchase, but purchasing more. Then yield rate for all schools, almost all schools in the country, have been going down and some elite schools will brag about how low their yield rates are or their admissions rates but we don't. We think our mission is to help students come here and have transformational experiences. The yield rate for all schools has been going down. Students are shopping more because it's so easy to apply.

Students are doing more and more applications on their phones and online and not filling out laborious paperwork. So you're seeing yield rates go down because they're applying more. That means we've got to get more at the top and then be more effective up and down that funnel. So the CRM has to get them the right information at the right time and in the right format to entice them. We're gauging all that and have great metrics we will talk about here in a minute. We are measuring the clicks and how they stay and where they hover and where they go and don't go on the web page; we're measuring all that kind of stuff to see how effective we are.

Vice President Weldy added, and just to let you know, in order to get those 26,000 applications, we connect with about 250,000 students and we have identified ways in regards to increasing that. For example, we purchased names, PSAT much sooner. So we're able to connect with students when they're freshmen and sophomores in high school, and we had not done that before. In the past we've focused mainly on identifying or recruiting juniors and seniors, and you need to connect with students much earlier in the pipeline in order to get that added interest in your university.

Trustee Strauss replied, I have another area related to statistics that I'd like to mention. We're talking about statistics here at a lower level and whether we have the ability to be able to benchmark them. Some of these management functions should be happening within various business units and its data that doesn't rise to the level of Board oversight, however, we would expect somebody is overseeing it. But we've had an interest for some time about being able to construct a dashboard that includes key indicators, some of which would relate to enrollment or to financial matters, or to other things. But we want an outcome related to strategic planning that we move in the direction of being able to find an agreement on what the suitable metrics are, have appropriate benchmarks, and then have appropriate reporting to the Board so that we have an opportunity to be able to find an agreed upon mechanism for accountability.

President Baker responded, we're on board with that and Al has been looking at some of those trying to figure out what they are. Some of them are obvious about enrollments and expenditures, and head counts, but we'll come back to you with a proposal on that. We think that it is important for management purposes up and down the organization. We were talking about getting high schools, freshmen and sophomores are one segment of the pipeline, community colleges and transfers are another one. So our recruitment activities are going to be different than high school. Later today we'll be up at Elgin having those conversations, figuring out how to do that kind of work better. Vice President Kaplan helped set up the BS/BA business program at Hoffman Estates. We hope that starts this coming fall with five community colleges. The recruitment there is going to be done largely through the community colleges They have the students in the pipeline for expressing interests, who are talking to advisors who can suggest the Hoffman Estates program. We've got to figure out how to dovetail with the advisors in those five community colleges and others and get the information out and recruit that way. There are different channels of communication depending on which of the niches we're looking at and that's why we identify all those niches and cover them.

Chair Strauss asked, while those strategies may be different, is the infrastructure the same, are the same people making admissions decisions for different streams that are coming into the funnel?

President Baker responded, the admissions decision is the same, but interesting you ask the question relative to community colleges. We had a task force this summer that met yesterday regarding the outcome of their work to clarify who has what roles relative to community colleges. Who is doing the recruiting, who is doing the program development, who is doing the interface on potential new programs on their campuses. There are different community college tasks that you need to be doing and this task force was to take out a clean sheet of paper and say how we would do this appropriately. Again, we're putting all those pieces into place. Recruitment, which would be how many recruiters, what kind of materials, where are they going, when, and how often, and what's the message? Going around to the right events, tours and customer service. We also revamped our student orientation this summer which helped our yield rate. During the two day orientation we have moms and dads more involved than we had in the past.

President Baker continued communications, we've talked about the CRM and the kind of communication that's going out; phone calls, e-mails, personal visits, etc., and, in the back office, communication systems; processing systems of applications as well as the CRM. Recruitment, all counselors now report to a senior associate director. That allows for more teamwork, cross-training and improved communication. They have regular team meetings, shared calendars, and master recruitment calendars. They may be basic pieces that we should have had in place but didn't and now we do. New staff, we've hired fluent Spanish speakers that will help us with the growing Spanish-speaking market. We've got improved on-boarding for new staff coming in so that they're trained and ready to go. We've got an alumni recruiter contact. We have a huge alumni network and we need somebody to help us with the alumni who are leaning forward trying to help. And then travel, we're reimaging the travel priorities and frequency trying to go to the highest impact areas rather than just the trails we've always followed. We have a master recruitment calendar so we can coordinate all of our activities.

President Baker added, events, tours, customer service, recruitment visits at events, are all on Hobsons Connect of the CRM through an on-line sign in which will result in an e-mail generated while the student is on campus. Now they are in our system and we are watching and communicating with them. Then we're working on high school and community college visits making sure that we're going to the right places at the right times. We reorganized the call center. Outbound callers are averaging about 400 calls per shift and that's a good increase over what we were doing before so it's become much more efficient. The data systems help us with that as well. We did some contracting out this spring with call centers just so we could get all the calls in that we needed for those hundreds of thousands of contact. Now we have daily follow-up protocols for new prospects so if you show up we get back to you in a very short period of time, within the next day.

President Baker continued, communications, centralized marketing communications partnership, they have a great relationship and that's really important to have marketing and admissions working hand in glove. They listen to each other and they adjust relative to what they're both hearing and it's been very effective in handling admissions, social media, web and then the print publications. We have great expertise in the marketing communications area around print publications and web media and social media, so we don't need to recreate that in the Admissions Office.

President Baker added, we have a new associate director in the CRM analyst position created. We've updated the website with new templates and responsive designs. Which means the web adapts to the size of your device which is a little bit more work, but really important because people are looking at things on different devices. We have more accessible and friendly kinds of communication. Also a market survey is in the works with University Marketing and Communications. We're looking at our brand and what our brand perceptions are. We have five new hires to the staff. That's part of what brings me back to the list in the ROI, what do we really need here to be effective question. We're automating remaining paper and manual processes. We're scanning the inquired cards and getting them into the system, increasing efficiency and access to information; the outlook system and the on-base system are now interfacing; looking at college review reports and we're querying viewer access and training for all interested staff so there are significant upgrades in our systems processing and access and we're optimizing the filters. We had a massive cleanup. We had 12,000 filters built into this thing so we've cleaned those up, cataloged the most useful ones, and got it into a much more useful and user-friendly package. All the contacts are now flowing through a stage funnel from prospect down through the funnel to confirmed and doing what it needs to do. Enrolled term will pass through the nightly interface with PeopleSoft so we've got the systems inside talking with each other which was not happening in the past. We're reorganized the territories and organizations, defined and assigned nightly via bulk edits from the various territories, and then those are processed. We're rebuilding a variety of pages that were out of date. Ms. Rollins and her crew were invited to Hobsons National Conference to present about this massive overhaul in a short period of time to a standing room only crowd. I think that speaks to the reputation they are growing and to a vision to have our Admissions Office be a national model. Continuing the success, we need to model the best practices and pilot with colleges. They're piloting with the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences and they're doing an annual CRM tune up and training. So when I mean partnering with the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, we've got this central recruiting function, but then we've got colleges, so who is doing what? Who's responsible for which parts of the funnel and then how do we interface those so that a central recruitment function is dovetailing with the activities of the colleges, their expertise and their interest. We are doing some pilot work with Liberal Arts and Sciences to really work out those bugs with our largest college. We're working on earlier student-to-student engagement. When our students talk to perspective students that may be the best sales. It's the most believable, the most honest, and gives you the kind of molar details like what it is really going to be like if I come to school there. We've doubled the number of Northern Ambassadors, the students that give tours of campus among other things. These students are so inspired. One of the students had transferred from a community college and is now a Northern Ambassador. She just finished her junior year with us and I asked her what was the difference between your community college and here and it was like I thumped her on the head or something because she was kind of stunned for a minute and then responded, it was like well everything is different. This is a university and I came here to do research and I'm doing research. I've published this paper and it would have never happened anywhere else and on and on. It really showed you the power of a research university; and what better person to tell a perspective student about her experiences.

President Baker continued, and we're continuing to refine the communication procedures, ant versus elephants metaphor, we would communicate in waves, we decide we need to communicate and we would send out 600,000 e-mails but they weren't targeting and directed and they didn't communicate with people at the appropriate times or what was of interest to the individual student. So the CRM allows for those predictive analytics and allows us to target and get specific information, the ant level information out to them rather than these big waves of stuff. What do we know about today's perspective students? Here's some interesting things, there are secret shoppers meaning they just like to shop our website but they never really apply or talk to us, they just look at us and then they show up. They didn't go through all the normal funnels, but showed up. So we really have to have those pieces in place and that is why the marketing and web and social communication stuff is so important. They make decisions later in the cycle. Kind of surprising, they're shopping up to the last minute for the best deal.

Yield rates are on the decline nationally, I noted that. Sometimes they put deposits down in more than one school even though they know they're going to lose it, they'll spend the $50.00 or $100.00. Sometimes they go to double orientations, just because they show up at orientation doesn't mean they're really coming, which means you'd better do a good job at orientation and knock their socks off, and great strides were made in that regard this summer. They are marketing savvy, they can read through all the stuff because all the schools are doing the same. They have greater financial need. 52% of NIU's first time, full-time freshmen for the fall of last year were PELL eligible, the federal low income eligible students. What are we doing? We're insuring that the websites are up to date and all have the right operational links and emails and addresses, etc. We're really trying to keep up to date on all of our points of pride. We're meeting with students regularly and giving them our business cards, talking about what they do next. Showing them the easy way into the institution and we're asking our students to share their own stories with the potential incoming students. We asked this question at the meeting saying you probably are wondering, how can I help? We asked them to feedback about how admissions is doing and what they need to do to better interface with them, focus on customer service and support. Everybody can treat somebody civilly; everybody can help somebody find their way through the institution. Utilize the master recruitment calendars so that the left and right hands know what they're doing and reconsider electing someone from your area to be part of the recruitment committee. The campus recruitment committee is responsible to get together and coordinate activities and it's important to have all those pieces from all the units coming together. There's a parallel in the marketing and communications group where they have the Marketing and Communications Council that does similar kind of conceptual work for marketing communications.

Trustee Boey added, I want to share with all of you and, after all the hard work of enrollment, we need to be sure we provide a good experience on the first day of registration. We do not lose them in the first couple of days because the image of NIU to those parents and students is everything going forward. If we get them to the first day, we don't want to lose them after two weeks, that particular time frame is so important.

President Baker responded, well there's the old saying that in a student's academic career, the first year is the most important, and the first month is the most important in the first year, and the first day is the most important of the first semester. I think our summer orientation did a great job and they do registration work at orientation in the summer so the students don't have to sign up the first day of classes. Students can register at a computer terminal or on their phone or when you're here for orientation and have good advising, so I think we're streamlining that.

Chair Strauss asked, is there a certain number of the initiatives that Admissions is engaged in that just serves as the fundamental framework and needs to be done regardless. There are a number of other things that we tried over the past year, and I'm sure there are yet other things that will make an effort to experiment with in the future, but we had some discussion about how we couldn't tell whether a particular strategy that Lipman Hearne suggested or somebody else asked us to try really worked. I'm wondering to what extent we're getting organized so that we can make data driven decisions about which programs that we're investing in are actually paying a return.

Vice President Weldy responded, I'm actually putting together a group of staff members throughout the campus community to sit down and talk about a more predictive modeling and as it relates to all of these new initiatives that we're doing, we need to be able to predict where our enrollment will be in the fall. I think that we're heading in the right direction, that if you have all these initiatives you have to at least know whether or not they're working. We've done a lot of new initiative, not just in regards to recruitment, but also as it relates to retention and we need to be able to identify where that success is coming from for us at the university.

Chair Strauss added, I think the experiment is maybe harder to design if you're changing more than one thing at the same time, but an example would be the Lipman Hearne strategies which had predicted outcomes. Some of those were directed toward identifiable populations so that there should be ability after the fact to go back and determine whether or not you'd actually achieved the desired result and then you'll know whether it's worth either expanding or replicating those programs. My interest is just seeing that we're doing that sort of work. I don't have a bias toward one program or another, but it occurs to me there should be some rigor to this process.

Vice President Weldy responded, that's part of our work too because I'm very interested in knowing from the standpoint of what we were able to know what we yielded from all of those different initiatives. Off the top of my head, I can tell you there are a few initiatives that I felt probably worked better than others, but we have our ten day count numbers so now we can sit down and go back and really come up with more of a clear picture of where those students came from.

President Baker added, actually Eric and I had this conversation Monday and you're right. Lipman Hearn said okay we need to call this pool of students and we think we'll get 412 out of that or whatever the number is, well we can go back to that pool of students. Now we may have it with other stuff so it's going to be imperfect, but we can go back and say well there's 302 not 412, we can go back and do those metrics. That's what we're off to do now, is to go through those steps and see what links we can make.

Trustee Marshall responded, in the not too distant future would it be possible to get somewhat of an idea of some of the other targeted groups among students that constitute those arrows across the top of our funnel?

Vice President Weldy asked in regards to the recruitment of certain groups across?

Trustee Marshall clarified or identification of the different groups?

Vice President Weldy responded, we can definitely narrow those down for you.

Trustee Butler asked, presumably when Ms. Rollins talked to this group she was talking to chairs and department level folks and deans and associate deans and so forth. I'm wondering if you could help me understand what the specific role of a faculty member or a college administration plays in the recruitment of undergraduates.

President Baker responded, it's farther down the funnel. My sense is in the past our colleges, because there wasn't a strong central recruitment function, went out and did stuff on their own. They visited 300 high schools a year or whatever because there wasn't a coordinated effort going on and they had some positive impacts. When you do that though you recruit for your college and not the university, and many high schools will only allow you in once a semester or once a year, and if you go in and represent a college, you've now said six or seven other colleges can't show up, you've taken our turn. This is why we need to coordinate that activity. They can help at these 300 and some fairs that we go to. They need to be there to represent their college, and then they need to work a lot on yield rates so that when we get the contact into the CRM down and far enough where we've got a hot prospect so to speak, then we can have somebody call and talk to the student about being a major in X. We also need to have a central function of coordination for campus visits and coordinating scholarships because we've got central scholarships and college scholarships, most of which have parameters around who gets them, so we need to do that dovetailing and matching and coordinate that with the central function. Retention is a huge piece, not just recruitment. There's a lot of retention activities that are going on in colleges; curricular, co-curricular, advising. Advising is another piece of recruitment and retention.

Vice President Weldy added, things like a call-a-thon and calling perspective students in which faculty and staff have participated. We've had a couple of scholarship events in which we have invited students who are interested in receiving some of our merit scholarships, having an interview day and having faculty and staff participate in the interviews. Another example is during orientation, this is the first time that we actually invited faculty to give short, brief lectures during orientation. So we had perspective students and families sit in and have the experience of knowing what it's like to sit in on a lecture here at NIU. Those are things that we had not done before but each faculty member has their own talents and some are more comfortable talking with students on the phone; some are more comfortable speaking with students in larger groups.

President Baker added, it's not just faculty, it's all the staff of the university. It's how you treat the students. Curb appeal makes a difference and I would like to thank the grounds crew for their work this summer keeping the University Grounds looking nice and, in particular, for campus tours it makes a difference. There are those pieces that go into play wherever you are in the institution. IT with the data interfaces students are using such as the CRM and Outlook. It makes our processing much easier. So everybody plays a role, both the academic leaders and the non-academic leaders. Everybody was asked to lean forward and think about how I am going to help with this.

President Baker continued, let's move to Marketing. I'm going to give a brief version of the situation, externally there are fewer high school graduates. There has been slow decline and a change in the racial profiles for the next decade with more Hispanic and Asian students and fewer African American and white students. Illinois is a hyper competitive market, everybody wants to recruit in Illinois. We have cost pressures from community colleges with the first two years at a lower rate. Internally we've had fragmented spending on marketing and communications as opposed to a coordinated central fashion. We have many voices and many looks leading to brand confusion. We have underweighted the resources in Marketing and Communications. There are 65 out of state colleges with admissions offices in Chicago.

Trustee Boey asked how many offices NIU has in other states.

Ms. Dean responded, I don't believe we have offices in any other state.

President Baker added, we have recruiters around Chicagoland and we visited community college on a regular basis, but we don't have physical offices in other community colleges or other universities. This shows it is a very competitive market, increasingly competitive.

President Baker continued, we have many graphic designs in publications about NIU but not a lot of brand theme across it. Some key priorities were to build a new narrative, which we have done, and new tag line. Your future, Our focus. We have filled resources gaps and aligned internal resources by restructuring dramatically in this area. We've stepped up communications with staff and faculty around all those activities. The Marketing and Communication Council is a great vehicle for that, which consists of 45 people who are doing the marketing and communications work out in units around the university that formerly didn't talk to each other. Now we're coming back together into a coordinated fashion. We are making our digital assets work harder and we're assessing it so we know whether people are actually looking at web pages and what they're doing with them, so instant metrics. We need to harmonize our voice and graphic look, partner with Student Affairs and Enrollment Management, and make news through our research and faculty achievements. We need to appeal to those outside the university as well as those inside. Target national news as well with big stories such as Reed Scherer's work on the Antarctic ice sheet last year. Over a billion hits on that story alone. Also, we have gotten a lot of national attention regarding the Games of Thrones class on campus. When you start getting hundreds of millions of hits on your website, you're appealing to the outside. You're getting the name out. We've got the material, we just need to figure out how to let the rest of the world know about it. The department's been realigned from the top with campus communications, university marketing, and institutional communications, and it's a much more effective group. Then underneath we've got creative services with design, photo, video, and web.

President Baker continued, Lipman Hearne worked with us this summer and are now starting a brand perception study which will take six weeks from start to initial recommendations.

Ms. Dean added, we wanted to get a great 360 degree of what our brand perception is so we have internal groups such as faculty and staff as well as current students. We have external groups such as potential students, student who inquire about NIU and chose to go elsewhere all the way down to students who actually were admitted to NIU and chose to go somewhere else. We want to know from them what their choices were and why. We've got parents of potential students that were surveyed as well as alumni so we get that 360 degree view of what the perceptions are out there.

Trustee Butler asked, what are some of the confounding discoveries that you've made in that process?

Ms. Dean responded, the surveys haven't gone out yet. I fully plan to present all of that information to the entire campus. I think that's information that could serve all of us very well to know what those perceptions are.

Trustee Butler replied, yes because I think it would be useful if we learned there were all these odd behaviors and perceptions and assumptions that some of the applicants or prospects bring to that engagement that would at least be the beginning of a conversation campus wide about do we really understand the mindset of the higher education prospect today.

Ms. Dean replied, absolutely and I think that's a really good reason why it's important to survey our faculty and staff too, to see if what we think we're projecting is what's being perceived.

Trustee Butler added, it's not to say that we need to adjust ourselves to that perception, but we've got to understand it and then we need to figure out how do we get our prospects to understand who we really are and then want to become part of that.

Trustee Chavez asked, are you going to try and survey graduate students as well?

Ms. Dean replied, yes.

Trustee Chavez added, that's probably a really good pool of people to talk to because they have all of their outside undergraduate experiences versus just NIU.

Ms. Dean noted, we do have prospective graduate students as well as current graduate students in that. It will start going out next Monday. I'm not sure if all the surveys will go out at the same time, but I'm hopeful that they'll go out all next week. We'll have about 6 weeks from that point until we get our recommendations, but it will take quite a while longer to really dig into that data and pull some useful information. My goal is that we can use this information to help fund yield on the recruitment side this year so that we can still affect fall 2016 numbers.

Ms. Dean continued, in Simple Truth what we're trying to do is assess how we represent our brand, how we're out in the market, and then try to bring all of the different communicators on campus into a bit closer themed look and feel and tone.

President Baker added, Simple Truth, also at the prospect stage to assure consistency in our brand expression throughout all communications. The recruitment journey map, what is the journey that a student goes through from the time they have a glimmer of interest in NIU to the time they're enrolled in class.

Ms. Dean added, that speaks to how we are perceived, who is communicating, and what level do the colleges come in. What we're doing is we're asking all of the communicators on campus to let us know from that very first moment a student first comes in contact with the university. It could be checking out the website or from one of either e-mails or postcards. From that very first communication, we want to map out what exactly they're experiencing from the university on every level. Just to give you an idea of how many different departments communicate, we have 17 at the university level that communicate with perspective students, such as Admissions, Orientation, Housing and Dining, Testing, Health Services, Financial Aid, Scholarships, Honors and CHANCE. Currently there isn't a centralized location that all of those go through so we want to make sure that the tone is consistent, that the look is consistent. We know that the more consistent those things are the better we will be able to breed trust in those students and hopefully get them to understand that NIU is the place for them. In addition, following those 17 different departments at the university level, we go to the college level and then department level. We're mapping all of that out so that we can have a better understanding, a full understanding, of what students experience from NIU.

President Baker replied, can you see the CRM system trying to coordinate all these activities. That's the dovetailing of these groups together and then the coordination out to people to avoid a bunch of random communication that confuses applicants.

Ms. Dean continued, this is the final piece that we're working on with Simple Truth. We need to communicate with a singular tone, singular voice, but that's not to say we need to all be communicating the exact same thing. Each college has a personality and what we're trying to do is to help each college figure out what that exact identity is and what are their proof points such as programs within a college (ranking, their graduation rates, job placement rates, etc.). What are their differentiators and play into those, but within the university umbrella so that we're supporting not only that college brand, but the university brand as well.

Trustee Butler asked at what point the departments and colleges enter the process.

Ms. Dean responded, currently we don't know. I can't say for certain especially throughout the entire university. What that recruitment journey mapping is going to do is let us know exactly where each one comes in.

Trustee Butler asked, do we have any open access or standard industry knowledge about the role of the major or the anticipation of courses of study or directions a student may take in terms of curriculum and their decision to go to a university?

Ms. Dean responded, that is something that we're pulling right now that we're going to be comparing in terms of where the colleges come in the recruitment cycle and how important each of those are. We do know that if a student has already decided what they want to study, certainly they're looking for that program in the college. The university is the surrounding piece, but the centralized piece is the program. There are certainly a lot of students who enter into universities who are still undecided. So there are at least two pieces of the pie there.

Trustee Butler, asked what do we know about that? Do we know how many students are undecided, what percentage are undecided, truly undecided? They came here because they wanted to go to Northern, they like the look and feel, they like the community, but they really don't know what they want to study versus students who at least think they know what they want to study?

Ms. Dean replied, sure, I'm certain that we can pull that information so that we can see what sort of numbers our incoming class come in as.

Trustee Butler added, if you figure out at the top do they have a sense of what they want to study and then they go in this direction. They don't have any idea, then it's a whole different value proposition.

Ms. Dean continued, absolutely and the Director of the Academic Advising Center, who advises all of the undecided students, and I have just been talking about how do we recruit the undecided student because that certainly is a different communications vehicle and flow.

President Baker added, the majority of our students identify a college that they want to go into. We track that on a weekly basis actually. How many applicants, admits, the colleges and then the undecided group which is around 10-15 percent.

Trustee Butler responded, my assumption is that the majority of students know what they want to study, they plan out their futures and their careers. They want to be an accountant, a doctor, a lawyer, a police officer. They would be excited about envisioning the path they're going to take within this context and environment to become an expert in that field to reach a point where they can call themselves an accountant, a lawyer, a doctor, etc. etc. That is where the marketing becomes really exciting because how do you develop a program to motivate so many different people without involving, in a very deliberate way, the most passionate people within those college and departments in that process.

Ms. Dean replied, I agree with you. We also have in addition to the University Marketing and Communications Council, a sub-set of that, the Marketing and Social Media Subcommittee. Those are the marketing professionals in each one of the colleges. With that group, we're reaching out to those passionate people to get them to be spokespeople for each one of the colleges. It's a goal of mine to be able to do that program specific marketing. That's an enormous undertaking for a university of this size and we haven't done that before, especially at the top levels, but that is certainly something that we need to be moving towards.

Trustee Chavez added, just as a preface, I came to Northern undecided and at Orientation the leader asked me what do you want to do when you grow up. I said be a lawyer, and the response was alright, political science for you. You marketers of the people that are passionate about those areas and should be mixed with Admissions.

(Provost Freeman arrived @ 3:30 pm)

Ms. Dean added, we have been working closer together. The Marketing Department is only five or six months old now. All of the things that we're undertaking are new for us and for the university. We want to make sure that we do everything correctly. We build in metrics so that we can measure where we have been versus where we are and know where we can spend our money in the wisest. The Director of Admissions and Marketing are working towards that.

President Baker continued, so to keep us rolling, digital marketing is a big deal in the contemporary world and we're doing a pilot study on that.

Ms. Dean continued, we are actually the first foray into program specific marketing. We've selected two programs that are ready and by ready I mean we are in a new template, we are responsive design within that template for the website and the program is able to grow. We'll be out in the digital space for the first time with the program specific marketing for each one of those programs. This will build a template for moving ahead with more programs. With this template, we are looking up at the prospect level at the top of the funnel to create more applications...

Ms. Dean continued, there are a myriad of ways to market via video online. YouTube is one of those places, but as you're online and you're watching videos there is usually a ten or fifteen second ad or interstitial and those are some places where we could really start boosting our visibility online. The top social media site used currently, meaning right now by 2015 high school seniors, is YouTube, closely followed by Facebook which is constantly updating and upgrading their video policies. Right now Facebook will automatic play videos when they are posted so as you're scrolling through your timeline you don't have to press play, it automatically plays, which a huge benefit for us. Seventy four percent of our peer institutions post videos once or twice a month or less. So if we can beat that, which we are, we'll have more visibility in those social media spaced than our peer institutions. We also need to make sure the videos that we're posting are of information that our potential students want to know about; campus life, student life, scholarship, financial aid information, program specific are up there in the top. In addition, the length of the video must be considered because by the end of a 30 second video, you only have 80 percent of the people watching, that's 30 seconds. So we need to also make sure that we are capturing imaginations and interest within those 30 seconds to try to pull them in a little bit further, but producing nothing more than two minutes.

President Baker added, so online videos really focused up and down the pipeline here, up and down the funnel?

Ms. Dean responded, we can use them in different ways. Basic campus life and student life videos could certainly be used in the final push, the melt communications meant to increase yield, but you know at the top level, prospect level, we could be using video in terms of program specific videos. What they can expect from that program, what the professors look like, how do they interact with their students, that sort of thing.

Ms. Dean continued, we are aligning all of our recruitment communications working closely with Admissions. We need to increase our major specific digital marketing campaigns as much as our budget allows. We need to increase tailored communications in terms of segmenting. Not only giving them what they need when they need it, but segmenting populations because we know what speaks to one population does not speak to another. What will interest a freshman will not interest an adult learner. We also are partnering with community colleges to create a cohesive campaign where we're recruiting for both institutions so that it's a partnership and we're highlighting the partnership between the institutions and demonstrating to those students that we're both here for them and we'll make it a smooth transition. Then we need to make all of our further decisions based on analytics, so building in those metrics, having the numbers and deciding how best to spend our money based on those analytics. This was sort of a reminder that not everything's purpose is marketing but everything has the potential to be a marketing piece and can contribute to our marketing efforts; meaning that maybe something that we've produced for an internal audience, maybe it's a video that we intended to be internal, but if it's online students are going to see it and that's the final point that anything we have online has the potential to bring in an interested student. Our internet site, our website which is 60,000 pages large should be a window into our institution and not a file cabinet. I think that's a really important piece to mention.

Chair Strauss asked, it would probably be appropriate for us to have some general conversation and maybe I can lead it off. I had a couple observations that I wanted to pass along to my colleagues based on my attendance. The first thing that I would remark on based not just on this meeting but on the others that I have attended previously as well is how impressed I was at the intelligence as well as the commitment of all of those who attended the session. There was interested participation, there was good range of questioning that was present in the meeting, and it evidenced a level of engagement of all of those who were involved down to the department chair level or the director level which I think should give all of us a lot of hope for our ability to be able to successfully communicate ideas to people throughout the organization. I made two other personal observations and others in attendance may have viewed them differently or may have other observations too. The first is that there's sort of a theme. Trustee Butlers questions hinted at this, but there's tension between some of these functions that we talked about today that can be performed in a centralized and a decentralized manner. And there's an issue as to who has control of those resources, are they effectively deployed and how effective are they being utilized? This manifests itself in a number of different ways and is a challenging, higher level, management problem, but there were questions that really focused on this and it's something that warrants general attention. The last observation that I had was that today, as at the strategic planning session and the ones that preceded it, the process started by taking a look back at the triangle model. The triangle model has certainly been a way to be able to induce people to think creatively about projects that they're using and giving them a framework to be able to validate whether or not things that are happening are generally consistent with the direction that we think the university ought to be headed in. But I think that there is a challenge from those who attend the meetings and there certainly has been in my thinking about how the triangle model, and it doesn't exist by itself, it is part of a framework that includes institutional goals and objectives, but there's difficulty in figuring out how this manifests itself tangibly. How many students are we going to have? What size is the institution going to be? What is the institution going to look like physically? So from my personal perspective, this is something that we should probably be reflecting on some, that the Board maybe has some views on these issues that we'd like to pass along. This would have been the type of conversation that we would have had if we had our more traditional strategic planning workshop that we've done over the last several summers but did not have the opportunity to do this year. I think it's also something that the senior administration might reflect on, because I hear the question that I posed being asked by others on campus as well. I don't know whether this represents just a communication challenge or whether there really are some things that would require our attention in being able to try to be able to provide an answer.

President Baker responded the last two I think are excellent observations and I agree with the first one, there is a lot of energy in the room with people leaning forward wanting to help the institution fulfill its mission so I was buoyed by that. Just one other comment just on that, you communicate about budget and enrollments and political environments and structural issues, but everybody is really working hard and they don't always pick those pieces up so I think it was good to get everybody together and talk through those things so we're all with a similar framework and can talk about the issues and then move forward. I think people appreciated that. Centralization versus decentralization, a few weeks ago I gave an assignment to all the vice presidents to write an essay in their area about centralization versus decentralization. What are their thoughts, what are the parameters, are there ways to be more efficient and effective by either decentralizing more or centralizing more? What are the heuristics you would use to decide on that? We plan to collate those essays and then talk about that as a Cabinet and kind of discover the emergent themes coming out of it. I think that can also fit potentially with program prioritization as we go through that and we get all the programs in the institution. Specific metrics, I think you're right that we've got a compass but now we need some mile markers as the compass guides us down the road. We are looking about benchmarks and some specific goals in specific areas. We are developing this infrastructure now and have to come back with our metrics and build into them. That's the next logical step as we use the compass to guide us to a distant point, but are we getting there fast enough? Are we going too slow or too fast in some places? I think that's exactly right and you can do it by college or program or interdisciplinary or location or wherever it might be.

Provost Freeman added, I would just say that we used the dean's council this morning to address centralization and decentralization as well as some opportunities to increase excellence while increasing costs. Carry over from our previous review and there was as much energy in that room and surprising willingness to look for more centralization to keep mission in the college and efficiency at the forefront and the deans are completely on board with all the things that Trustee Strauss has mentioned.

President Baker added, there has been a lot of progress and Marketing in six months. Pretty amazing amount of progress in a short period of time. It feels good to see these pieces coming together and, as they come together, we can put the short and longer term goals in place so that we can track progress.

Trustee Butler replied, I concur with Trustee Strauss that my experience at the sessions that I have attended, the one in July of last year and then October, there is an enormous amount of energy and there's a real earnest desire to contribute positively to the goal of reversing the enrollment decline for the university and then improving those numbers so that we have the resources to continue to do creative things and address issues of compensation, etc. I think more so than ever before during those sessions, I made the connections that were necessary to see the issues that were challenging the university. It would be impossible to be in those rooms and not walk out of there with a sense that we are together in this effort, that we must work together and continue to work together to address these challenges. This is more to Chair Strauss third point, I really appreciate and I tend to be more toward the philosophy that culture trumps strategy as we've talked about before. I do think if you develop a culture that is constantly innovating and appreciating and embracing creativity and innovation and programming, strategy just develops and people become accountable for their goals and they begin to achieve them. But at the same time, I think there's a need for a unifying vision for the future of the university. How big are we going to be, what are we going to emphasize? Beyond the language we use to attract students in terms or marketing, who are we? Do we have a sense that we can call ourselves anything in particular or are we really just a composite of multiple different identities based on the various disciplines that we're involved in? Part of me wants to get at the role of curriculum in setting the expectations for students because to me the curriculum is the product. That's really what we have to offer. I go back to this notion that students come to the university with an idea of what they want to become experts in; what they want to become knowledgeable in; and what career they want to have. They are very career focused, but I think we can take that energy and turn it into a focus on what they're going to learn and study and become experts in. Then I think if we did that we could generate more enthusiasm within the communities of faculty and staff who are directly involved in the teaching of the students and providing the co-curricular activities with the students. They would become more energized in this process if they felt as though the university was selling what they did everyday as opposed to a general view across colleges and universities throughout the nation. If colleges become more savvy in marketing, there is a sense of an alienation between the language the university uses to sell itself and what's actually happening at the university. Are those matching up? Now I think we're doing that better than I've seen it done elsewhere, but I do think that there's a sense still here within the people who are in the classrooms that there's a disconnect or there's not an effort to connect between what's happening in the classrooms and what's being sold publically. The other point which I think is somewhat unrelated, but also related is graduate recruitment. I want to see this be part of our overall institutional strategy. Because to me this is easy. I don't mean to trivialize it, but I don't think I've met many juniors and seniors in college who didn't want to go to graduate school. They're hungry for it. For one they're afraid of going out into the world where they have to be held accountable and they've got to balance their checkbook and be responsible, but for the other, they really crave that expertise and they want to take it to the next level and I feel like we may be making it too complicated or missing the really simple opportunity to reach out to that student base and say you can continue here at Northern and get an advanced degree within your chosen field. Not everybody can and not everybody should, but I think if we made it a really effort as part of our mission to make sure that we don't let anybody leave Northern before realizing that goal here if that's their goal.

Trustee Boey asked, how far behind or far ahead are we compared to other state universities in Illinois?

Ms. Dean responded, part of what we're doing is benchmarking against our top competitors so ISU, U of I, UIC; I'm not certain how old their departments are or how much they've done. They're certainly out in the digital space a lot more than we are currently, and that's a place we can really make quick gains. That's why I'd like to see us focus on digital. Digital is also a space where we can really hyper-target based on all of the information that you can gain through that, we can really hyper-target there. Part of what we're doing is benchmarking so we can see how we compare and how we match up. It's in progress right now and I can certainly come back and report to you on that.

Trustee Boey continued, and the other thing that we had talked sometime back, was online programs. How do you see that online program associated with this entire marketing? Is that something that we should keep in mind?

Ms. Dean replied the adult learners who are can't make it out to one of the regional campuses or our main campus or it's somebody who has a schedule that doesn't allow that it could be a vitally important market for us and something that I would include in all of these segments certainly.

Chair Strauss added, on a non-marketing aspect of that you may have a comment or Provost Freeman may have a comment, but I think there's a component to it that isn't just marketing it's about the integrity of those programs and the science behind what sort of result you can achieve.

President Baker replied the pedagogy of online education has advanced a lot in the last 15 or 20 years and must go through a sequence of steps to insure the quality of education in the pedagogy. I think we've got a good team, a talented team that has the right steps to follow through as you develop a program, not just a course, but a program to meet those needs. We're in a good space there now, we need to do the market research to figure out, when almost everything in the world is online, where do we fit in a particular competitive space and how do we succeed in it.

Provost Freeman added I would just echo that. We've moved forward as a university in the following way. We're no longer allowing an artificial sense to be the primary driver of how we develop online programs. We've moved completely to a model where we have the quality training and infrastructure that can be scaled up in-house to create online programs that are high quality and that our faculty are proud to call NIU programs.

We are definitely removed from an emphasis of an online course here to having online programs and we've been using general market data to base what we can do through some of the data bases that are available or general national market research, we think this has the best opportunity and so we're going to put our resources there first.

President Baker is entirely right and the deans were right up there this morning when we talked about centralized versus decentralized. Something that we'd like to see centralized is the ability to do the market research to help inform how we go forward with the online programs. I look forward downstream to being able to talk to the Board not just about what we've done with online programs, but to think about summer differently and to really transform summer and to fit into all of our academic mission online piece, so I think there will be more to come on that topic.

Chair Strauss replied, I think those would both be good programs to have and when we talk more seriously at greater length about online programs, I think we should also hear about the infrastructure required to support it. So you have people taking those programs at odd hours and remotely from different time zones, not only is there a marketing challenge, but you have to have an admissions office open at different times, financial aid open at different times, a help desk open at different times; and I think it would be interesting to hear about what those challenges are and how we're moving toward being able to address them.

Trustee Butler responded, absolutely and the only reason I brought up the subject is because with all the marketing effort they're going through now it seems like it's a good time to start thinking about that subject again because we have lost it for about a couple years now.

President Baker responded, we can do it and update you on it to show you where we are. We've made a lot of progress. As you can see, online is one of those segments. What we did with those segments is after we did all this and created the ground work, we then had five or six what we called lightening round examples of people implementing the triangle to effect recruitment and retention in round table discussions. We also included diversity, customer service and a few other things in discussions. We've collated that data and now we're going to come back and look at a matrix on each one of these in terms of impact and feasibility. The cabinet will sit down and look at those and then start making assignments out of priorities coming out of that conversation. That's how we finished the day to get to talking about next steps.

Chair Strauss asked if there was a follow-up meeting like last year.

President Baker responded we will have one late this fall.

Chair Strauss continued, I think at the appropriate time after that material could be synthesized it would be good to have a shorter update maybe for the Board as to what happens in that session as well.

President Baker added, we have a number of diversity offices and diversity student groups on campus and a number of years ago there were open houses in an uncoordinated fashion around campus. The last few years we've been doing something called the Neighborhood Block Party and last year and this year it was held in the Chick Evans field house. It's essentially an open house for all these units and that starts at 5:30 this afternoon. I just wanted to offer it if anybody wanted to attend.

OTHER MATTERS

No other matters were discussed.

ADJOURNMENT

Chair Strauss asked for a motion to adjourn? Trustee Marshall so moved and Trustee Butler seconded. The motion was approved. Meeting adjourned at 4:04 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathleen Carey
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.