

Minutes of the
NIU Board of Trustees of Northern Illinois University
Special Meeting
August 15, 2019

1. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

The meeting was called to order at 1:08 p.m. by Board Chair Dennis Barsema in the Board of Trustees Room, 315 Altgeld Hall. Recording Secretary Karen Campbell conducted a roll call. Members present were Rita Athas, Montel Gayles, Veronica Herrero, Madalynn Mershon, Bob Pritchard, Vice Chair Eric Wasowicz, and Board Chair Dennis Barsema.

Also present: President Lisa Freeman; General Counsel Bryan Perry; Board Liaison Matt Streb; Vice President for Administration and Finance Sarah McGill; and University Advisory Council (UAC) Representatives Cathy Doederlein, Kendall Thu, Janson Hanna, and Jeffry Royce.

2. VERIFICATION OF QUORUM AND APPROPRIATE NOTICE OF PUBLIC MEETING

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

3. MEETING AGENDA APPROVAL

Chair Dennis Barsema asked for a motion to approve the meeting agenda. Trustee Bob Pritchard so moved, and Trustee Rita Athas seconded. The motion was approved.

4. CHAIR'S COMMENTS/ANNOUNCEMENTS

Chair Dennis Barsema noted that Trustee John Butler was on the phone and not physically present at the meeting. Chair Barsema asked for a motion to approve Trustee Butler to have the ability to speak in the meeting on the phone. Trustee Montel Gayles so moved, and Trustee Veronica Herrero seconded.

The motion was approved.

Chair Barsema welcomed members of the University Advisory Council, noting that UAC Representative Kendall Thu had been newly installed as the Faculty Senate President.

Faculty Senate President Thu welcomed the new trustees, and Student Association Leader Ian Pearson. Faculty Senate and University Counsel are NIU's primary shared governance bodies. Faculty Senate President Thu said that as part of his assuming his role effective July 1st, he has been trying to get the pulse of the campus and spending time reading the constitution, the bylaws, and the academic procedures and policy manual. Further, he has had conversations with his counterpart at sister institutions in Illinois to understand shared governance.

Faculty Senate President Thu learned that students, staff, and faculty have a guarded optimism about NIU, and that morale is better than it was three to four years ago. There is broad support for President Freeman, and he looks forward to advancing President Freeman's vision in the months to come.

UAC Representative Jeffry Royce said that he felt humbled and honored to have been selected to represent the Operating Staff as their president this year. He served as vice president last year and plans to represent the Operating Staff to the best his ability. He stated that shared governance is both the most rewarding and the most frustrating experience in 12 years at NIU. He continued that

he had the opportunity to meet with several members of senior leadership to address topics both pleasant and difficult, and every time he walked away with a sense of confidence that staff opinions and thoughts were taken seriously. He looks forward to further expanding Operating Staff Council's collaboration with campus administration this year.

5. PUBLIC COMMENT

Chair Dennis Barsema asked if any timely requests had been received for public comment. General Counsel Bryan Perry called forward James Krause and noted that speakers should limit their comments to about 5 minutes.

James Krause: "I'll try and do my best to do that. Good morning, everyone. My name is James Krause. I'm entering my third year here at NIU, all of which I have been a journalism major. I currently work as a sportswriter at the Northern Star, and I also spent last year starting work for the Northern Television Center. That's what my comments are going to be on today; the closing of the Northern Television Center building and the future of the journalism program at NIU. Thirty percent of college students drop out after their first year and in spring of 2018 that's where I was standing and looking at. I have failed half the classes I took my freshmen year. I was often isolated in my dorm room away from family and friends. I was unhappy with my academic standing and my standing in journalism which had long been my passion. Last year, I started working with the Northern Television Center sports program, Top Shelf Sports, which is not at all associated with any classes. It's individuals who are passionate about sports media. And that's where my passion for journalism creating content, telling stories, and informing the general public was reinvigorated and made stronger than ever. Through my time working and the NTC with General Manager Beni Enas and recent graduates like Eddie Garcia, Konstanze Fowler, Coby Price, Matteo Ovula and many others, I found myself as part of a team that was dedicated towards giving students a voice, giving light to the truth and giving students like myself a chance to try things they wouldn't have tried otherwise. In June, after seeing ten of my colleagues graduate the month prior, I learned through a Facebook post by an alumni that the NTC building was being closed under the behest of the Communications Department Chair, Mehdi Semati. This was revealed to our General Manager Enas after she was told that she would be released from her contract at the end of the academic year if she didn't find a job prior to that point. And I'm happy to say that she has found a job at Geneva High School. NIU spokesperson Joe King, a man who I've had the pleasure of working with on many occasions said in his statement to WREX in Rockford on behalf of the university 'The change is a part of a broader effort by the faculty to reenergize the program with an eye towards increasing the focus on preparing students for the modern media world.' The equipment at the Northern Television Center in part given to us by Enas is being moved from the NTC studios to Watson Hall Studios. It's a studio I personally have never been in before. And upon hearing it and upon efforts rather to tour the studio earlier this summer, I was informed that the studio was closed over the summer and that equipment wouldn't be moved there until the start of the fall semester. The word of those who have worked there, and images published earlier this summer by the Northern Star are my current reference point. And even with those there's no idea amongst even Enas and people who have worked for a long time in broadcasting, if broadcast will be possible from there. This leads to the first exception many alumni and students took with this issue and that's the lack of formal word from the school and the department. With the exception of Enas and the Dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences Judy Ledgerwood, both of whom I'd like to thank for being open to discussing this issue with myself and others over the past several weeks and months, the only way we've heard public comment from the university on the matter is fittingly enough through local TV and print media outlets. Some of the reasons given for the closure of the NTC building would be valid concerns if not brought up after the fact by the department and the university. For one, attendance in the classes designated for NTC of which there are currently only two, are down. This is a result of many factors, enrollment at NIU like many Illinois public universities, has dropped 5.5% from spring 2018 to spring 2019. Enrollment

in Journalism across many public universities has seen a drop as well. One detail that has been left out of articles published and discussed is changes to the curriculum. In 2015 Journalism 356 became a prerequisite to Journalism 354 meaning that both couldn't be taken at the same time and as a result, Journalism 355 saw a major depletion in the number of those available and skilled enough to produce broadcasts, also went down. Enas arrived in 2015 when the changes were implemented, got the curriculum changed back in 2017, and will take effect this year and this is with 18 of 20 students who previously took the Journalism 356 class taking the Journalism 354 class. Another concern was supporting NTC financially with another set of factors. Fiscal Year 2015 saw the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences budget at \$3.1 million and in Fiscal Year 2019 it was \$1.9 million. Yet despite this, expenses at the Northern Television Center doubled from \$28,000 in fiscal year 2016 to \$62,000 in Fiscal Year 2019. In part, this is due to new lighting fixtures that required more power when broadcasting. Also, in part, university IT recommended keeping on dozens of computers in the television center running at all times to deter potential brownouts or losses of power. Enas herself never experienced a brownout at NTC over her two years there. Only issues with equipment used for the broadcasts. She was also never approached about the issues related to expenses or electricity or maintenance at NTC until her notice. Enas was the only full-time member of the staff at NTC with one part-time teacher returning this year, one part-time teacher last year leaving midway through the year and two graduate assistants of which Konstanze Fowler is one. If the problems at NTC is about cost effectiveness, there are many solutions to the issues that I hope have been brought up to this point. And if I would be the first person to present those to this group or to the communications department, that terrifies me that there hasn't been an effort to at least find some sort of solution outside of cutting the program. The future of the program will be determined over the next couple months. Not of course before the plug was pulled on the NTC building, alienating students and alumni who have been through the program. There's not a ton of alumni here today. It's actually only the three students. And that is because a lot of them are working thanks in part to the experience they've gotten at the Northern Star and the Northern Television Center. From the Chicago Sun Times to the Kane County Cougars to the Chicago Sky and many other local stations in Rockford and Senator and Naperville. For students that are still here, we're angry, we're scared, we're frustrated, but we haven't quit on trying to produce broadcasts. We're going to try. And despite maybe one of the most difficult summers of my life, I haven't quit yet on this university and getting the education that I want as long as we don't quit and give up on NIU. Please, NIU can't quit on not just its journalism students, but all of their students. Thank you."

General Counsel Perry called forward Konstanze Fowler.

Konstanze Fowler: "Hello. My name is Konstanze Fowler. I graduated in May from NIU and I'm coming back to get my master's here at NIU again. And I'm going to be the teaching assistant for the classes that used to be taught at the Northern Television Center. When I was looking for what schools to go to years ago, I wasn't sure what I wanted to do. I thought about a lot of different things, but I never really expected to find my home or my voice in TV. I visited a few colleges just to see if they offered my variety of interests in an adequate manner, and NIU won that by far. I really wanted to go to Quincy University actually. That was my dream school, but they had a very bad, not very bad, but I was very disappointed in their TV studio. Their TV studio was built in a classroom setting which is what Watson is going to be. The NTC has the high ceilings that we need for the lighting that when I was at Quincy the professor told me that the main thing that they wished that they had was those high ceilings for lighting. And to make it clear, high ceilings are important in lighting because it gives more of a natural effect to the image that we see and makes it a lot better. If you still don't understand the sun is high in the sky and we get the light from above so all of our shadows are on the ground, but in a studio with lower ceilings the light is more in front of you so your shadow is more behind you and it definitely affects it a lot. When I visited NTC I was blown away and it looked like a real TV studio. I loved the idea of it being its own

unit. It doesn't feel like school; it feels like you're helping a real news studio. It's an amazing feeling knowing that everyone in the building is focused on the exact same thing. The energy surrounding NTC is much different than any of the classrooms that I've been in. A friend of mine took classes in the Watson Studio and said you can hear people in the hallway during a production, and at NTC we all go silent because we all want to make a stellar show. For just a tad more background on me, I'm extremely quiet in classrooms. When it comes to school, I hate raising my hand or being called on. I hate talking in front of people, but NTC has helped me overcome that anxiety more than anyone ever could. When I first showed up at NTC I started off quiet as usual, but as I learned how to run a show, I found my voice. I can easily talk to anyone at NTC even if I don't think I know them and I'm willing to speak here today on behalf of NTC because it's that important to me. When I direct a show at NTC for NTC news I am loud, and I am proud. Speaking of those shows I'm directing; we are an award-winning show. We have worked hard to get where we are and moving to Watson is taking us a step in the opposite direction. We have real directors and producers who have visited NTC and are impressed with what we're capable of. Our work at NTC helps students get jobs as soon as they graduate and again, we wanted many to be here, but they are at their jobs that they got from their work at NTC. It may be just a building to the school, to the university, to you, but to its students and its alumni it's a TV studio and moving all the equipment to a new location isn't going to help us improve. I ask that you consider helping us reopen NTC and since the school claims money is part of the problem, we do have alumni who are willing to donate. The school is pushing us backward, but we want to move forward together. Thank you."

Chair Barsema thanked both speakers for their comments, and for their contributions to NIU. He then explained that the Board of Trustees gave NIU administration a very tough financial goal, and that the decision to move the television had been very deliberative. Chair Barsema felt quite confident that the decision that the administrators made was the right and the necessary decision for everybody involved, including the students, on a long-term basis.

6. PRESIDENT'S REPORT NO. 135

University Recommendations Forwarded by the Board Committees

Agenda Item 6.a.1

President Lisa Freeman introduced agenda item 6.a.1. These are recommendations for faculty tenure and promotion for two individuals who were hired late in the cycle by the College of Health and Human Sciences into the positions of Director of Nursing and an Associate Dean who also has a faculty appointment in the Allied Health and Communicative Disorders Department.

Chair Dennis Barsema called for a motion to approve the agenda item. Trustee Montel Gayles so moved, and Trustee Eric Wasowicz seconded.

Chair Barsema stated that a roll call vote was necessary because the student trustee is not allowed to vote on issues of tenure or promotion. Trustee Butler, who was on the phone, does have the ability to vote.

Trustee Rita Athas: Yes

Trustee John Butler: Yes

Trustee Montel Gayles: Yes

Trustee Veronica Herrero: Yes

Trustee Madalynn Mershon: Abstain

Trustee Bob Pritchard: Yes

Vice Chair Eric Wasowicz: Yes

Board Chair Dennis Barsema: Yes

The motion was approved.

7. OTHER MATTERS

No other matters were discussed.

8. NEXT MEETING

The next regularly scheduled meeting of the full Board of Trustees is September 12, 2019, at 9:00 a.m.

9. CLOSED SESSION

Chair Dennis Barsema asked for a motion for the Board to conduct a closed session to discuss the following subjects that are authorized by the Illinois Open Meetings Act, as amended: Personnel Matters as described under sections 2(c)(1)(2)(3) and (21); Collective Bargaining matters as described under Section 2(c)2; Litigation and Risk Management matters as described under Sections 2(c)(11) and (12) of the Open Meetings Act; and Closed Session Minutes matters as described under Section 2(c)(21).

Trustee Rita Athas so moved, and Trustee Veronica Herrero seconded. A roll call vote of the Trustees to recess to Closed Session was as follows:

Trustee Rita Athas: Yes	Trustee John Butler: Yes
Trustee Montel Gayles: Yes	Trustee Veronica Herrero: Yes
Madalynn Mershon: Yes	Trustee Bob Pritchard: Yes
Vice Chair Eric Wasowicz: Yes	Board Chair Dennis Barsema: Yes

The Board adjourned to closed session at 1:38 p.m.

Reconvene Meeting:

The meeting reconvened at 3:08 p.m. Chair Dennis Barsema asked for a roll call. Trustees present were Rita Athas, Montel Gayles, Veronica Herrero, Madalynn Mershon, Bob Pritchard, Vice Chair Eric Wasowicz and Board Chair Dennis Barsema.

10. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Dennis Barsema asked for a motion to adjourn. Trustee Montel Gayles so moved, and Trustee Veronica Herrero seconded. The motion was approved.

The meeting adjourned at 3:11 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Karen Campbell
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.