

Minutes of the  
**NIU Board of Trustees**  
**Research and Innovation, Legal and Legislative Affairs**  
**COMMITTEE MEETING**  
November 12, 2020

**CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL**

The meeting was called to order at 10:00 a.m. by Committee Chair Rita Athas. The Committee meeting was conducted through video conferencing communications and was conducted pursuant to Section 6 of Executive Order 2020-7 (Suspending OMA requirements of in person attendance by members of a public body). Recording Secretary Jessica Cima conducted a roll call of the Trustees.

Trustee John Butler: Present	Trustee Montel Gayles: Present
Trustee Veronica Herrero: Present	Trustee Bob Pritchard: Present
Trustee Aidan Shields: Present	Trustee Eric Wasowicz: Present
Board Chair Dennis Barsema: Present	Committee Chair Rita Athas: Present

Also present were President Lisa Freeman, Committee Liaison and Vice President for Research and Innovation Partnerships Gerald Blazey, General Counsel Bryan Perry, and Board Liaison and Chief of Staff Matt Streb.

**VERIFICATION OF QUORUM AND APPROPRIATE NOTICE OF PUBLIC MEETING**

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

**MEETING AGENDA APPROVAL**

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

Committee Chair Athas asked Ms. Cima to conduct a roll call vote.

Trustee John Butler: Yes	Trustee Montel Gayles: Yes
Trustee Veronica Herrero: Yes	Trustee Bob Pritchard: Yes
Trustee Aidan Shields: Yes	Trustee Eric Wasowicz: Yes
Board Chair Dennis Barsema: Yes	Committee Chair Rita Athas: Yes

The motion was approved.

**REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Committee Chair Athas asked for a motion to approve the minutes of the August 20, 2020. Trustee Pritchard so moved, and Trustee Butler seconded. The motion was approved.

Committee Chair Athas asked Ms. Cima to conduct a roll call vote.

Trustee John Butler: Yes

Trustee Montel Gayles: Yes

Trustee Veronica Herrero: Yes

Trustee Bob Pritchard: Yes

Trustee Aidan Shields: Yes

Trustee Eric Wasowicz: Yes

Board Chair Dennis Barsema: Yes

Committee Chair Rita Athas: Yes

The motion was approved.

### **CHAIR'S COMMENTS/ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Committee Chair Athas welcomed the members of the University Advisory Committee and requested comments.

UAC Representative Kendall Thu commended his colleagues for securing research funding despite the challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Trustee Athas noted that NIU was recognized in a global universities report. She further noted that General Counsel Bryan Perry would be providing an overview of the General Counsel's work.

### **PUBLIC COMMENT**

No public comments were received.

### **UNIVERSITY REPORTS**

Committee Chair Athas asked Vice President for Research and Innovation Partnerships, Dr. Gerald Blazey to provide an update from the Division of Research and Innovation Partnerships. Dr. Blazey reported that despite the challenges posed by the pandemic, NIU faculty and staff have continued and expanded their entrepreneurial and scholarly achievements, which have included book awards, fellowships, as well as new partnerships that encompass COVID-19 research and diagnosis. He further noted that these efforts have been highly collaborative, reaching across campus involving numerous divisions and highlight that as an institution NIU has shown great nimbleness and mission focus.

#### **Agenda Item 7.a. State Legislative Report**

State Legislative Liaison, Jenna Mitchell, reported that NIU received notice that its proposal for the Governor's Emergency Education Relief (GEER Funds) was selected and will receive \$456,300. NIU has authorization to begin spending these funds as of October 28, 2020. She further noted that NIU received notice from the Illinois Capital Development Board that funds were available to begin moving forward with the planning process of NIU's new Health IT building. Ms. Mitchell provided a preliminary overview of the November 3, 2020 state election results, noting that the results are considered unofficial until the State Board of Elections certifies the results on December 4, 2020. Ms. Mitchell reported that the state's FY21 revenues are currently projected to be \$6.3 billion below the total FY21 appropriations. Ms. Mitchell reported that adequate and stable funding remains the top request for the spring state legislative session. Ms. Mitchell reported that on October 23, 2020 NIU co-hosted a virtual event with the Partnership for College Completion to bring institutions and legislators together for a discussion on equity.

#### **Agenda Item 7.b. – Federal Legislative Report**

Dr. Blazey provided a federal relations report on behalf of Assistant Vice President Dr. Anna Quider, who was unable to attend the meeting. Dr. Blazey reported that national elections were

held on November 3, 2020 and that 435 members of the House of Representatives, one-third of the Senate including one Illinois seat, and the Presidency and Vice-Presidency were up for election. Vice President Joe Biden is the President-elect and Senator Kamala Harris is the Vice President-elect of the United States. The House of Representatives will remain in Democratic control, with one of the narrowest margins in history. Control of the Senate will be decided by the January runoff elections for two seats in Georgia; the Republicans only need to win one seat to maintain control of the chamber. He reported that Illinois Senator Dick Durbin won re-election, and, in the house, Marie Newman will replace Dan Lipinski in the 3rd district and Mary Miller will replace John Shimkus in the 15th district. Incumbent Lauren Underwood has a narrow lead in the 14th district, but it remains too close to call. Dr. Blazey reported that The Office of Federal Relations is seeking opportunities to appropriately position NIU and our federal priorities for success in the new environment.

#### **Agenda Item 7.c. – Sponsored Programs Administration Quarterly Report**

The committee reviewed the sponsored program administration quarterly written report submitted by Assistant Vice President Dara Little. No questions were raised. Committee Chair Athas noted that Assistant Vice President Dara Little had recently been elected to the Board of Directors for the Society of Research Administrators International.

#### **Agenda Item 7.d. – General Counsel Report**

General Counsel Bryan Perry opened by stating that there were no registered public comments for the meeting. He then, provided an overview of the services provided by the Office of the General (OGC), noting that the General Counsel’s office aims to provide high quality legal services to the university in a responsible, constructive, and timely manner. The office aims to protect and promote the mission and values of the university, including compliance with its obligations and protection and promotion of its interests; to minimize legal risks and costs; and to address and resolve legal disputes. He noted that the OGC provides counsel and serves as parliamentarian to the Board of Trustees. The OGC provides legal advice and counsel to the university administration, faculty, and staff on the business and operations of the university, and they provide legal review, interpretation of contracts, and processes.

#### **Agenda Item 7.e. – Faculty Report**

Dr. Melani Duffrin, Professor of Interdisciplinary Health Professions, reported on her scholarship, specifically on her development of the FoodMASTER Initiative, which is a compilation of programs using food to teach mathematics and science. She noted that since 2005, the program received funding from the National Institutes of Health Science Education Partnership Award and has also received funding from the USDA.

### **OTHER MATTERS**

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

### **NEXT MEETING DATE**

Committee Chair Athas noted that the next meeting will be held on February 18, 2021.

## ADJOURNMENT

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

Committee Chair Athas asked Ms. Cima to conduct a roll call vote.

Trustee John Butler: Yes

Trustee Montel Gayles: Yes

Trustee Veronica Herrero: Yes

Trustee Bob Pritchard: Yes

Trustee Aidan Shields: Yes

Trustee Eric Wasowicz: Yes

Board Chair Dennis Barsema: Yes

Committee Chair Rita Athas: Yes

The motion was approved.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:35 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jessica Cima/Crystal Doyle

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.*