

Board of Trustees of Northeastern Illinois University

Academic/Student Affairs, Enrollment, and Technology Committee
Meeting Minutes
March 18, 2021

A meeting of the Academic/Student Affairs, Enrollment, and Technology Committee of the Board of Trustees of Northeastern Illinois University was convened on Thursday March 18, 2021 via video conference. Trustee Ann Kalayil called the meeting to order at 8:30 a.m.

The following Trustee committee members were in attendance: Marvin Garcia, Gabriela Loreda, and Ann Kalayil

Other Trustees present: Carlos Azcoitia; Sherry Eagle, Jim Palos, Charlie Serrano, and Jonathan Stein

Others in attendance: Dr. Gloria Gibson, President; Mary Pat Burns, Board Counsel; Karl Voigt, Assistant Secretary to the Board; vice presidents, and members of the University community.

Opportunity for Public Comment

Trustee Kalayil announced the opportunity for public comment. There were 2 requests to speak; one requester was unable to attend the meeting.

1. **Dr. Gabriel Cortez**, NEIU Faculty & Director of the ENLACE Leadership Institute

Topic: an update on current equity-based initiatives to better serve NEIU students and increase enrollment, retention, and graduation rates.

Trustee Kalayil and President Gibson welcomed Dr. Terry Mena to his first committee meeting. Dr. Mena provided brief remarks. The University is currently working on a plan to resume face-to-face classes in Fall 2021; Sharon Heimbaugh, chair of the University's COVID Task Force, will make a presentation on re-opening plans at the May committee meeting.

Presentation by the Council on the Status of Latinxs

The Council on the Status of Latinxs is a group of Northeastern faculty and staff "...committed to representing and advocating on behalf of Latinxs to ensure the academic, professional, social and cultural needs of Latinxs are met. The CLS advises, monitors and initiates actions that support and promote the status of Latinxs at NEIU, paying special attention to issues of climate, representation, policies and practices." Drs. Hector Morales, Isaura Pulido, and Patricia Aguado presented on the council's areas of focus: policy; NEIU student-centered equity and culturally responsive pedagogy; and outreach, recruitment and retention of students. An additional lens is being cast on Latinx faculty recruitment to undergird the stated goals and objectives. In response to historically uneven recruitment and hiring practices at the University, NEIU is pursuing the Seal of Excelencia designation. In order to gain this designation, the University must demonstrate how it intentionally recruits and retains Latinx students. The group presented a timeline, short and long-term goals, and a comparative overview of what other colleges and universities in the area are doing to address the same concerns.

Following this presentation, Trustees engaged in a robust discussion and have consented to establishing an *ad hoc* sub-committee of the Academic/Student Affairs, Enrollment, and Technology Committee dedicated to the leadership aspect of the Seal of Excelencia designation.

Trustee Kalayil asked for a member of the finance committee to be part of the *ad hoc* sub-committee and Trustee Serrano agreed to be co-chair with Trustee Garcia. Trustee Eagle requested a report from the University's leadership as the administrative voice alongside the work of the Council. A charter will be drafted for the sub-committee, Trustees Garcia and Serrano will nominate a third member and present the sub-committee's plan at the May Academic/Student Affairs, Enrollment, and Technology Committee meeting for approval by the full board.

Presentation on the Undocumented Students at NEIU

Ms. Luvia Moreno, Assistant Dean of Students and Director of Undocumented Student Resources, presented on the status of undocumented students at NEIU. Since 2011, the University began recognizing undocumented students as a unique population, and in 2014 institutionalized an office to provide specialized support and services. Since then, the University has worked incrementally to improve support systems and services to help undocumented students. Undergraduate undocumented students are, on average, retained at higher rates and more likely to graduate within 6 years when compared to the University's general student population. The single person resources office advocates on behalf of undocumented students, and helps them navigate the University's various systems and networks such as admission processes and tuition payment plans. The director collaborates with local high schools and community colleges to recruit interested students, as well as works in tandem with agencies and counterparts across the region and nation to help the University continue to adapt and provide the best possible experience for undocumented students.

Manish Kumar, Vice President for Finance and Administration, and Marsha Henfer, Interim CIO, provided a technology update. Pandemic relief funds have provided for hundreds of new and refurbished laptops for both faculty/staff, and students. Several classrooms on campus are receiving technology upgrades. The HELP desk is fielding around 200 calls/requests per day. At this time, there are 92 technology projects under way in the following order: business applications, process improvement, security, student support, and systems and network. Compliance audit findings are slowly being addressed but are dependent upon hardware, software, and controls. So far in 2021 the University's investments include: high performing servers, centralized storage system available over a high-speed network, network switches and routers, and upgraded firewall, uninterrupted power supply, and network/system management controls and monitoring tools.

Dan Weber, University Registrar and Interim Associate Vice President for Enrollment Services, provided a Fall 2021 enrollment update. New freshman and transfer student applications and acceptances are trending downward. This trend is consistent across the state. Re-admit and acceptances are holding steady with last year. Several recruitment events are planned over the coming months to increase yield. Graduate applications are trending slightly ahead of last year, and acceptances are expected to be slightly ahead of last year. Trustees asked for figures to accompany the report at its next meeting.

Frank Gaytan, Associate Provost for Student Success and Retention provided Trustees with a breakdown of federal funding dedicated to student success programs. Title V Individual Development Grant funding is for a period of 5 years from 2016-2021. The goals of the grant are to increase the fall-to-fall retention for first year students from 60.3% to 72%, and increase the fall-to-fall retention of first-year Hispanic students from 56.6% to 67%. First-year fall-to-fall student retention is at 66.7% making good progress toward the stated goal. First-year Hispanic fall-to-fall student retention is at 68.1% surpassing the stated goal. Total funding for this grant is \$2.6 million and supports 5 staff members and over 20 peer mentors.

Title III: EXITO (Exit on Time In STEM) funding is for a period of 5 years from 2016-2021. The goals of the grant are to increase the percent of first-year Hispanic students who pass gateway math courses from 25.7% to 32%, and to increase the fall-to-fall retention of first-year Hispanic students from 56.6% to 67%. As stated above, the first-year Hispanic student retention is at 68.1%. The math gateway pass rate is at 33.3%. Additionally, this grant funding supported the environmental sciences lab renovation. Total funding for this grant is \$5.3 million and supports 8 staff members, peer leaders, tutors, ambassadors, success coaches, summer research, welcome events, and several other initiatives.

Title V Caminos al Éxito Cooperative funding is for five years from 2018-2023 and is a cooperative effort between Wright College and NEIU. The goals of the grant are to connect students and families from the combined target high schools to the higher education system; enhance the freshman and sophomore experience at Wright College; enhance the advising pathway from Wright College to NEIU; and support degree attainment at NEIU through third and fourth-year career preparation support. This grant support 6 staff members and has a total award of \$3.7 million. Good relationships have been formed at the local high schools and the transfer process has been improved.

Title V CASA (Creating Access to STEM for All) funding is for five years from 2020-2025. The goals of the grant are to expand and make flexible pathways for students obtaining degrees in STEM; improve the academic program, increasing responsiveness to the needs of Hispanic and low-income students; increase the number of students in STEM majors and who graduate with STEM degrees within 5 years; and improve access to up-to-date labs to maximize the experiential learning potential in STEM for all students. The grant funding is \$3 million and supports 3 staff members and many program initiatives. The first cohort will be matriculating in fall 2021.

Provost Rome shared that he is part of a sub-committee of the IBHE Strategic Planning committee charged with finding ways to serve adult learners more effectively. In Illinois, African-Americans, Latinx, and white adults over the age of 25 with some college but no degree, represent approximately 1.7 million people. Dr. Rome has charged each of the deans to review their programs for inclusion in the University Without Walls degree in an effort to encourage adult learners to complete their college education. Dr. Rome will be reporting more on this at subsequent meetings. Trustee Kalayil asked to expand the adult learner demographic to include BIPOC in future reports.

Dr. Gibson informed Trustees that the most recent in-house search for a new Associate Vice President for Enrollment Services was failed. The pool of candidates lacked the overall experience and expertise needed and no candidate was selected. Dr. Gibson requested that the Board approve the use of a search firm to begin the search again. Trustee Garcia, seconded by Trustee Loredó, moved to recommend the approval to hire a search firm for the next Associate Vice President for Enrollment Services search.

Discussion: Trustees agreed there is a justifiable need to engage a firm for this search and provided their full-throated support.

Roll was taken and the vote was as follows:

Garcia: Yes

Kalayil: Yes

Loredó: Yes

The matter is recommended.

Old Business/New Business

Trustee Kalayil asked if there was any old or new business. The next committee meeting will be May 13, 2021. There was no further business.

Motion to Adjourn

At 10:42 a.m., Trustee Garcia, seconded by Trustee Loreda, moved to adjourn. The meeting was adjourned by acclamation.

Respectfully submitted,

Ann Kalayil, Committee Chair
Karl Voigt, Assistant Board Secretary
Approved June 10, 2021 as revised