

Board of Trustees of Northeastern Illinois University

Academic/Student Affairs, Enrollment, and Technology Committee  
**Meeting Minutes**

May 17, 2021

A meeting of the Academic/Student Affairs, Enrollment, and Technology Committee of the Board of Trustees of Northeastern Illinois University was convened by video conference on Monday May 17, 2021. Ann Kalayil, chair of the committee called the meeting to order at 12:03 p.m.

**Roll was called and the following Trustee committee members were present:** Marvin Garcia; Ann Kalayil; and Gabriela Loreda-Garcia.

**Other Trustees present:** Jim Palos

**Also present:** Gloria Gibson, President; Natalie Brouwer Potts, Acting Assistant General Counsel; Mary Pat Burns, Board Counsel; Karl Voigt, Assistant Secretary to the Board; vice presidents; staff; and university community members

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**Opportunity for Public Comment in Accordance with P.A. 91-0715**

Trustee Kalayil announced the opportunity for public comment. There were no requests to speak.

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**Chair's and President's Remarks**

President Gibson congratulated all May 2021 graduates including Trustee Loreda-Garcia. The virtual commencement ceremony was a success. Thank you to all faculty and staff who made it happen. Trustee Kalayil announced that May is Asian Pacific-American Heritage month.

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Academic Affairs Update

Dennis Rome, Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs presented an overview of student performance and perception during COVID. Undergraduate and graduate student grade point averages improved from spring, summer and fall 2019 terms to spring, summer and fall 2020 terms despite being almost exclusively remote. Of the 6,617 students surveyed about challenges and advantages they experienced over the spring 2021 semester, 9.7% or 645 respondents shared their technical, financial, and educational challenges, advantages to remote learning, and how they felt about their academic performance. The greatest challenges reported were paying tuition, unreliable internet or wifi access, and dealing with financial aid matters. Students reported that the most significant advantages to remote learning were no commute time and significant transportation cost savings, remote learning allowed for more time with family, asynchronous learning provided a lot of flexibility, and easier access to instructors. Overall, students believed their academic performance improved.

There are currently 1,555 sections scheduled for fall 2021; 1,179 will be face-to-face including 294 hybrid, 133 remote (synchronous), and 243 online (asynchronous). Provost Rome is working with all the Deans to create at least one wholly online degree program in each college. In 2022, the University will offer its first winter term; a three-week session for students to take up to four credit hours. The university's upcoming new degree programs are its new Ed.D., RN to BSN, minor in data analytics, undergraduate degree as well as certificate program in cybersecurity, and at least one new degree program that is completely online in every college. The university continues to work with local high schools to improve the dual enrollment program. The non-

traditional degree program is undergoing an overhaul due to a recent retirement. The university continues to provide faculty training and seminars through the annual faculty institute. Provost Rome answered Trustees questions.

#### Student Affairs Update: Seal of Excelencia

Terry Mena, Vice President for Student Affairs and Dean of Students announced that the Seal of Excelencia certification is currently underway. The university will not apply in the current cycle, rather wait until 2022. Trustee Garcia's sub-committee will bring recommendations to the ASSET committee.

#### Recruitment Update

Dan Weber, Interim Associate Vice President for Enrollment Services and Registrar, reviewed the enrollment figures as of May 6. Undergraduate applications are down 25% from last year, and acceptances are down 26% from last year. Graduate applications (including graduate certificate and licensure programs) are up 2% from last year, and acceptances are up 5% from last year. After the recently approved scholarship initiative, the university sent messages to all 1,941 of its admitted first-year students, and their parents alerting them to the scholarship. This prompted several responses from students about their intent to enroll. The university hired professional admissions callers to reach out to over 1,600 admitted students to follow up on the email messages regarding the scholarship initiative and to answer and field any questions. The callers will also begin calling admitted transfer students next week. Another recruitment tool is the housing scholarship that will be part of the social justice housing award and the living-learning communities (LLCs). Recruitment calls will begin for the LLCs initiative in the next two weeks. For former students who "stopped out" and had a maximum debt of \$3,000 with the university are eligible to have their old debt canceled if they want to resume their studies. So far, 47 students have accepted and are registered. This program will continue to be promoted throughout the summer.

#### Fall 2021 Retention Initiatives

Frank Gaytan, Associate Provost for Success and Retention presented a retention report. As a collaborative unit, the areas of academic affairs, enrollment services, and student affairs have been working together over the past year on a series of programs to sustain the university's retention efforts. These have included 3 training days for CPS counselors about the university's admissions/enrollment processes, and a series of admitted student welcome days. With the onset of COVID and restrictions last year, faculty helped reorganize the reading/writing placement programs, and the university began using a virtual math placement service that students can access at their convenience. Both upgrades have improved the placement processes. The tuition top-off program currently under way has helped remove a significant barrier for incoming students and is a unique incentive that will help with retention. Ongoing retention initiatives such as the many success programs, CCICS, El Centro and several federally-funded programs give students an opportunity to find a learning cohort that best fits their academic needs. This year the university will introduce several new living and learning communities (LLCs) at the Nest to build on the success of last year's social justice housing scholarship program.

#### Return to Campus Plan – Fall 2021

Sharon Heimbaugh, Director of Student Health Services presented a return to campus plan for fall 2021. The university is keeping a close eye on the Chicago COVID positivity rate and adjusting its recommendations based on guidance from the state and the city. At this time, the vaccination rate in the city of Chicago is at 31%. NEIU is entering Phase 4 guidelines which include social

distancing, limited gathering sizes, use of personal protective equipment, hygiene requirements, disinfection protocols, and awareness signage at all locations. Mitigation efforts include testing and vaccination sites on campus, contact tracing, flexible models for sick leave, work, and remote operations, and travel guidelines. Current city of Chicago capacity specifications for higher education classrooms, cafeterias, and other common spaces limit capacity to 50% and no more than 50 individuals while maintaining 6 foot distancing. The university is engaged in the installation of plexiglass, hand sanitizing stations, disinfectant wipes, and enhanced disinfection protocols at all locations. NEIU has entered a partnership with Heartland Health Services to provide COVID testing and vaccinations on the main campus for low-income individuals and NEIU students, faculty, and staff Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. – 5 p.m. from April 5 – June 18. Confidential SHIELD testing has been available to anyone in the community since March 11 and will continue through December 31, 2021. This is a partnership with the Governor's Office and University of Illinois SHIELD of Illinois. The university has developed a comprehensive interdisciplinary action plan and notification process designed to mitigate the spread of COVID. Return to campus will be phased-in over the summer, and will rely on public health guidance on increased/decreased face-to-face activities. As face-to-face work begins, affected employees are able to request a reasonable accommodation for alternate work arrangements in accordance with university policy.

#### Mental Health and Wellness for Returning Students

Nancy Easton, Director of Student Counseling Services provided an overview the counseling center, its staff, and its university-wide operations. The counseling center serves students in one-on-one counseling, group and couples counseling Monday – Friday 9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. and uses an after-hours service to manage crisis calls. Services are virtual at the moment. Members of the counseling center serve as consultants in a variety of ways and to a variety of committees and groups across the university. In addition to counseling services for students, the center provides outreach programming and workshops to the university at-large that address issues such as academic performance/anxiety, self-care, collaboration with other units for student support, and mental health first aid. As the university transitions back to face-to-face, the center will abide by all health and safety guidelines, and will keep routine therapy remote, with some exceptions. Outreach, training and supervision will be both remote and face-to-face. The center is adding a new case manager position, as well as starting a peer mentor program based on program models at other universities.

#### Technology Update

Manish Kumar, Vice President for Finance and Administration and Marsha Henfer, Interim CIO presented an overview of technology initiatives. The university's 2021 strategic priorities for network infrastructure include investments in servers, storage systems, network switches and routers, firewall, uninterrupted power supply, network and system management controls and monitoring tools, and classroom computer refresh with the primary focus on security, audit findings, and cyber insurance requirements. There are currently 21 active projects in varying levels of completion on track to be finished by the end of 2021.

#### Grant Proposal Development Services

Dennis Rome briefly reviewed the proposal with the committee. This matter was already recommended for board approval by the Finance, Buildings and Grounds Committee at their meeting earlier today.

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#### **Old Business/New Business**

Trustee Kalayil asked if there was any old or new business. There was no further business.

**Motion to Adjourn**

At 2:33 p.m. Trustee Garcia, seconded by Trustee Lored-Garcia moved to adjourn the meeting. The meeting was adjourned by acclamation.

Respectfully submitted,

Ann Kalayil, Chair of the Committee  
Karl Voigt, Assistant Board Secretary  
Approved September 23, 2021