

Board of Trustees of Northeastern Illinois University  
**Regular Board Meeting Minutes**  
April 17, 2025

A regular meeting of the Board of Trustees of Northeastern Illinois University was convened on Thursday, April 17, 2025 in the Third Floor Student Lounge at El Centro, located at 3390 N. Avondale Avenue, Chicago, IL 60618. Trustee J. Todd Phillips, Chair of the Board, called the meeting order at 1:05 p.m.

**Roll was called and the following Trustees were present:** Carlos Garcia; Ann Kalayil; Jorge Leon; Itzel Linares; Anna Meresidis; Michelle Morales; and J. Todd Phillips

**Also present:** Katrina Bell-Jordan, President; Nicki Bazer, Interim General Counsel; Karl Voigt, Assistant Secretary to the Board; vice presidents; staff; students; and members of the University community both in person and viewing online

---

**Motion to Permit Remote Participation by Trustees**

Trustee Linares, seconded by Trustee Garcia, moved to permit Trustees Betty Fleurimond and Paula Wolff to participate in the meeting remotely pursuant to Section 7(a) of the Illinois Open Meetings Act.

Discussion: both Trustees reached out to the Assistant Secretary in advance of the meeting to request remote participation due to work travel.

Roll was called and the vote was as follows:

Garcia: Yes                      Leon: Yes                      Meresidis: Yes                      Phillips: Yes

Kalayil:                              Linares: Yes                      Morales: Yes

The motion carried.

---

**Administration of Past Meeting Minutes and Records**

Trustee Leon, seconded by Trustee Meresidis, moved to approve the following written open and closed past meeting minutes, and to keep the closed minutes closed:

- Open and Closed minutes from the February 13, 2025 Regular Board meeting,
- Open and Closed minutes from the March 13, 2025 Finance, Buildings and Grounds Committee meeting,
- Open and Closed minutes from the March 13, 2025 Academic/Student Affairs, Enrollment, and Technology Committee meeting.

Discussion: there was no discussion. The motion carried by unanimous acclamation.

Trustee Morales, seconded by Trustee Garcia, moved pursuant to Section 2.06(3)(d) of the IL Open Meetings Act that the confidential written minutes of the closed session portion of the April 18, 2024 Regular Board meeting require confidential treatment and will remain confidential.

Discussion: there was no discussion. The motion carried by unanimous acclamation.

Trustee Kalayil, seconded by Trustee Leon, moved pursuant to Section 2.06(3)(c) of the IL Open Meetings Act to permit the destruction of the verbatim record of the closed session portion of the September 21, 2023 Finance, Buildings and Grounds Committee meeting.

Discussion: there was no discussion. The motion carried by unanimous acclamation.

---

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

Chair Phillips announced the opportunity for public comment. There were five registrations placed in advance and five presentations.

1. **Xiwei Wang**, representing Faculty Senate  
**Topic:** to provide an update on the work of the Senate
2. **Steve Frankel**, representing themselves  
**Topic:** advocating for the future of NEIU
3. **Rebekah Fitchett**, representing AFSCME Local 1981  
**Topic:** current contract negotiations
4. **Brandon Bisbey**, representing NEIU UPI Local 4100  
**Topic:** UPI's commitment to working with the administration and Board advocating for equitable funding
5. **Heather Carper**, representing themselves  
**Topic:** wages and the impact of income insecurity among Civil Service staff

---

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

President Bell-Jordan welcomed everyone to the El Centro location and thanked the staff for making today's runout meeting possible. Dr. Bell-Jordan announced that Spring commencement exercises are only one month away. FY26 budget planning is underway and the preliminary budget will be presented at the May 15 Finance, Buildings and Grounds Committee meeting. The annual Scholar/Donor Soirée was held Tuesday, April 8 in Alumni Hall. The University recently hosted delegates for a site visit by delegates from the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) as a final step in the accreditation process of the University's doctoral (Ed.D.) program in Leadership, Equity and Inquiry. The University awaits the HLC's decision sometime in June. On March 25, IL Senator Graciela Guzmán visited El Centro to talk with University officials about the MSN program and to visit the future nursing lab site. Senator Guzmán is committed to supporting the program. Lurie Children's Hospital the latest partner organization for nursing program student practitioners. The University awaits final approval of the program. University officials testified before the House and Senate Committees on higher education last month. The University expressed its gratitude to the Legislature for considering the proposed increase in FY26 appropriations, which would account for an additional \$1.2 million in funding over FY25. NEIU will be represented at the upcoming HACU conference in Washington D.C. where elected officials will be meeting with University staff. University officials will meet with the Latino Policy Forum in celebration of Latino Unity Day. Interim Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs and Claudia Mercado, Interim Vice President for Enrollment Management provided a brief update on the University's strategic planning process as the co-leads for the planning process.

Chair Phillips stated he is grateful for the University's leadership cultivating an environment where students can thrive.

Paula Wolff joined the meeting at 1:30 p.m.

---

### **COMMITTEE REPORTS**

#### Academic/Student Affairs, Enrollment, and Technology Committee

Trustee Kalayil reported that the committee met on March 13, 2025 and has one item to present for Board action today.

Trustee Kalayil, seconded by Trustee Morales, moved pursuant to Section II. A. 3. (b) of the Board's Regulations to approve the Academic/Student Affairs, Enrollment, and Technology Committee's recommendation awarding tenure to: J. Adrian Castrejon; Ashley Elrod; Wendy Gonzalez; Amirhossein Maleki; Olunbunmi Oyewuwo; Jody Siker; Christopher Straughn; and Andrew Young.

Discussion: there was no discussion. Roll was called and the vote was as follows:

Fleurimond: Yes      Kalayil: Yes      Linares: \*      Morales: Yes      Wolff: Yes

Garcia: Yes      Leon: Yes      Mercedesis: Yes      Phillips: Yes

The motion carried. *\*The student trustee is not permitted to vote on tenure.*

Provost Cofer introduced each tenure awardee and presented them with their tenure pins. Trustees expressed their congratulations.

Trustee Kalayil continued with her report. The committee received several informational briefings including a report on the status of the Higher Learning Commission's Accreditation Quality Initiative, a report on the University's ongoing Artificial Intelligence (AI) strategy and initiatives, Fall 2025 enrollment updates and retention updates, a report on the Nest financials, updates on student mental health and wellness programs, confirmation that the University's biennial Alcohol and Drug Abuse Prevention Policy has been shared with the community, and updates from CIO, Eliot Rodriguez, on the many technology initiatives ongoing at the University

#### Finance Buildings and Grounds Committee

Chair Phillips reported that the committee met on March 13, 2025 and has no items for Board action today. The committee received informational briefings on the FY2026 budget development, a risk assessment report on the University's vacant properties, and a risk assessment report on the University's federal grants.

The Committee presents Information Item II. A. Purchases of at Least \$100,000 but Less Than \$250,000 pursuant to Board Regulations Section 5. B. 2, and Information Item II. B. FY24 Business Enterprise Program (BEP) Annual Report pursuant to Section 15-25 (c-5) of the Illinois Procurement Code.

---

#### **Motion to Convene in Closed Session**

At 2:41 p.m. Trustee Kalayil, seconded by Trustee Linares, moved to convene into Closed Session pursuant to Sections 2(c)1, 2(c)2, and 2(c)11 of the Illinois Open Meetings Act to discuss personnel, collective bargaining, and litigation matters.

Discussion: there was no discussion. Roll was called and the vote was as follows:

Fleurimond: Yes      Kalayil: Yes      Linares:      Morales: Yes      Wolff: Yes

Garcia: Yes      Leon: Yes      Mercedesis: Yes      Phillips: Yes

The motion carried.

---

#### **Motion to Reconvene in Open Session**

At 4:00 p.m. Trustee Mercedesis, seconded by Trustee Wolff, moved to reconvene in Open Session. The motion carried by unanimous acclamation.

---

#### **Legal Report**

Trustees received a copy of the legal report in advance of today's meeting and had an opportunity to ask questions in Closed Session.

---

### **Old / New Business**

Chair Phillips asked if there was any old or new business. New business:

- Trustee Linares asked faculty and staff to encourage students to vote in the ongoing student officer elections.
- Karl Voigt presented a draft of the 2026 meeting calendar. Trustees did not have any objections to the proposed recommendations.
- Chair Phillips announced the following:
  - Statement of Economic Interests and Supplemental Statement of Economic Interests filings are due by May 1.
  - Next Board Committee meetings: Thursday, May 15 at the main campus.
    - Audit Committee meeting at 9:00 a.m.
    - Finance, Buildings and Grounds Committee meeting at 9:30 a.m.
    - Academic/Student Affairs, Enrollment, and Technology Committee meeting at 1:00 p.m.
  - May Commencement Exercises: Friday, May 16, 2025 at the Credit Union One Arena
  - Next Regular Board Meeting: June 5, 2025 at the main campus
  - Save-the-date: Chuck Kane Scholarship Golf Outing July 28

---

### **Motion to Adjourn**

At 4:09 p.m. Trustee Wolff, seconded by Trustee Kalayil, moved to adjourn the meeting. Discussion: there was no discussion. The motion carried by unanimous acclamation.

Respectfully submitted,

J. Todd Phillips, Chair of the Board  
Karl Voigt, Assistant Secretary to the Board  
Approved June 5, 2025