

Board of Trustees of Northeastern Illinois University
Academic/Student Affairs, Enrollment, and Technology Committee Meeting Minutes
May 15, 2025

A meeting of the Academic/Student Affairs, Enrollment, and Technology Committee of the Board of Trustees of Northeastern Illinois University was convened on Thursday, May 15, 2025 in the Student Union Golden Eagles Room located at 5500 N. St. Louis Avenue, Chicago, IL 60625. Trustee Ann Kalayil, Chair of the Committee, called the meeting to order at 1:36 p.m.

Roll was called and the following Trustee committee members were present: Ann Kalayil; Itzel Linares; and Michelle Morales

Carlos Garcia joined the meeting at 1:38 p.m. (via video)

Also present: Katrina Bell-Jordan, President; Karl Voigt, Assistant Secretary to the Board; vice presidents; students; faculty; staff; and University community members both in person and viewing online

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

Trustee Kalayil announced the opportunity for public comment. There were X registrations placed in advance and X presentations made.

1. **Jon Hageman**, representing John Albazi Student Research and Creative Activities Symposium
Topic: to report on the most recent 32nd Albazi Student Symposium held at NEIU on May 2
2. **Anika Tracy**, representing Honors Living Learning Community
Topic: student perspective in support of the NEIU LLCs
3. **Sam Mendoza**, representing Honors Living Learning Community
Topic: to express support for the continuation of the LLCs.

Chair's and President's Remarks

Trustee Kalayil reported that a delegation of Northeastern students and staff visited Springfield to advocate for the University's needs. NEIU's students shared their stories which resonated with elected officials. The visit was seen as a success resulting in 16 meetings with legislators to advocate for funding critical to student success. Trustees are looking forward to tomorrow's commencement exercises and congratulating 630 graduates. Trustee Kalayil extended congratulations on behalf of the Board to Daniela Navarrete on winning her election as the incoming Student Trustee. Trustee Kalayil thanked incumbent Student Trustee, Itzel Linares, for her contributions to the Board and committee over the past year. Today is Itzel's final committee meeting.

President Bell-Jordan reported that Academic Honors and Master's Hooding ceremonies were this past Monday and Tuesday evening, and that the University looks forward to tomorrow's commencement exercises. Dr. Bell-Jordan offered her condolences to the family and friends of the second-semester freshman who recent passed away. The University is pleased to announce it has met its FY2025 enrollment goal by 100%. University officials recently traveled to Washington D.C. for the annual HACU conference and met with Illinois legislators. Dr. Bell-Jordan commented on the NEIU advocacy tour to Springfield recently and thanked everyone for their participation in the equitable funding discussion and in support of the University's FY2026 operating and capital request budgets. The state's budget deadline is May 31. The University's strategic planning efforts will pick up again in the fall. An update will be shared with the University community soon.

ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

Academic Affairs

Interim Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs, Shayne Cofer, reported on the two-day site review this past March in support of the University's Ed.D. program approval. The visiting delegation has since submitted an enthusiastic review to the Higher Learning Commission (HLC). That review is being presented to the HLC's Institutional Action Council, which meets at the end of June or early July to vote on approval of the program. The University has received assurances that it should expect a favorable outcome and is looking to confirm the program's start date, possibly as early as Summer 2026.

About a month ago the University submitted its sixth round of responses to questions from the Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE) related to the proposed Master of Science in Nursing (MSN) program. IBHE officials indicated earlier last week that the program is expected to be on their June meeting agenda. On May 19th, demolition will begin at the El Centro location of the current spaces to make room for the nursing simulation (SIM) lab. Construction is expected to take a year. The MSN program cannot be reviewed by either the IBHE or the Illinois Nurses Association until construction on the SIM lab begins. The University has committed \$1.7 million toward construction costs and has \$2.7 million in asks currently being solicited for general program support and scholarships. The University has approached U.S. Representative Delia Ramirez for support of the project from her discretionary spending allocation.

Enrollment Management

Interim Vice President for Enrollment Management, Claudia Mercado, reported on the AY25-26 enrollment and retention goals. The University's Fall 2025 enrollment goal is 6,086 or a 5.8% increase over Fall 2024. This figure represents enrollment of 4,463 undergraduate and 1,623 graduate students, respectively. The target retention rate for Fall 2025 is 64%, representing a 7.1% increase over Fall 2024. The total credit hour goal for AY25-26 is 118,930, a 3% increase over Fall 2024.

Paula Hanley has been selected as the One Stop Center director effective June 2. An implementation team, comprising various departments and stakeholders, meets bi-weekly to discuss service delivery, technology needs, and student-centric design for the physical and virtual One Stop locations. The team is also conducting an observation project to identify student pain points that will help improve information accessibility. The center's design includes a workspace, storage, and office spaces with higher ceilings and sliding doors for privacy. Presently there is no student voice to inform the overall design. Trustees encouraged the group to incorporate a student representative as part of the design team.

Eliot Rodriguez, Chief Information Officer, reported that the technology team is working on a centralized calendar system, phone queuing system and call capabilities, implementing chat expansion to enrollment-related services, and creating an online platform as a center-specific information repository. Trustees asked about Chatbot functionality so prospective students can begin to find information before speaking with representatives. This idea will be considered as technology decisions solidify.

Student Success and Retention

Interim Associate Vice President for Student Success and Retention, Irma Ortiz, reported results from the recent academic holds program. To prevent student attrition and financial losses, NEIU implemented a new practice of placing academic holds on student accounts with outstanding balances prior to allowing students to register for classes. This bold move, supported by leadership, has resulted in a significant recovery of funds and a reduction in the University's bad debt allowance. The early hold initiative, targeting students with balances-owed over \$500, resulted in a \$1.24 million recovery across two semesters. The practice has not negatively impacted enrollment as an academic hold engages multiple parties to help students resolve their financial obligations and continue their coursework uninterrupted. Despite initial concerns about retention, the Fall 24 to Fall 25 retention rate is up 2.6 percentage points compared to the

previous year. The success of the initiative has been attributed to collaborative efforts among various departments and effective communication among students and advisors.

Student Affairs

Vice President for Student Affairs and Dean of Students, Terry Mena, reported over the last year, the Nest housing facility has implemented several initiatives to enhance the resident experience. These include a priority deadline housing application, an updated resident handbook with an emphasis on how to navigate and negotiate living in a shared space with roommates and the roommate experience, and formed a committee to review resident applications to review financial eligibility to live in the Nest. Building security measures have been strengthened particularly for entryway access. The University introduced mandatory resident hall meetings to regularly review community standards, expectations, rules and policies, and all the things one needs to know when living in a shared community. Student Government has also hosted town hall meetings to receive feedback from resident students. ACC sends out a student satisfaction survey midway through each year, and while the facility has received positive feedback from residents, challenges such as outdated furniture, noise levels, and guest policies remain ongoing concerns. 188 residents responded to this year's survey.

Veronica Rodriguez, Director of the Office of Student Leadership Development and LLC Co-Lead, reported on the Student Affairs side of the Living Learning Communities (LLCs) at the Nest. The LLC program, started in 2020, offers themed housing scholarships and peer mentorship to foster social support, community building, and academic growth. The seven uniquely themed LLCs provide opportunities for students to connect, develop, and succeed academically and professionally. The LLCs are Discover Yourself, Honors, Social Justice, STEM, CASEP, Future Teachers, and College of Business and Technology. Some LLCs are for new or newer students, some are based on a cohort model, and some are for upperclassmen with declared majors. Each LLC has a peer mentor, an established NEIU student who assists program participants navigate both university life and manage their overall education persistence.

Pamela Geddes, Professor of Biology and Co-Lead of the LLCs, represents the Academic Affairs side of the LLC program. The persistence of students in the seven LLCs is higher than the University average. Persistence data, measuring the percentage of students returning for the following fall term, is collected from the various LLCs, analyzed, and compared to a similar peer group not in an LLC. The comparison group for each LLC is based on the number of credit hours enrolled in, with the goal of controlling for factors that could impact persistence. Data shows that all seven LLCs have higher persistence rates (ranging from +2% to +19%) compared to their respective peer groups and have been improving, particularly within freshman-focused communities. Total LLC enrollment is stable at 100 students and students admitted into any one of them receives a 50% housing scholarship.

HOPE Chicago Scholarship recipients receive a 100% housing award from a private source and are not part of an LLC. Dr. Mena made a point to report that the University does not have any plans to end the LLC programs, but is looking for ways to expand them. Trustees are pleased with the academic results of students in the LLCs and look forward to further reports in the future.

Technology

Steven Harris, Dean of the Libraries, reported on its laptop lending program. The program originated from the need to support students during the pandemic with remote learning and has developed into a collaborative effort among various departments. The initial program started with Chromebooks, and early distribution faced challenges due to a lack of centralization and coordination among departments. Now managed by the library, the program utilizes excess laptops intended for faculty and those from LLCs, with a focus on students in need. The library tech desk handles check-in/check-out, provides basic software support, and ensures data security by wiping and re-imaging returned laptops. University Technology Services (UTS) offers higher-level support as needed. The lending program offers both short-term (14-

days) and semester-long (16-weeks) loans. For long-term loans, a lottery system was implemented to distribute available units among applicants. The library secured funding through PELL-55 grants and is working with a grant-funded office to acquire additional laptops. Working with corporate foundations like Dell and Apple and exploring partnerships with other universities could help alleviate concerns about the program's scale, sustainability, and the need for ongoing funding. The University is in the process of securing funding for approximately 30 additional laptop units, bringing the total to around 50 available units by the fall semester. Overall, the program has experienced minimal issues with equipment return, with only four units unaccounted for out of the total distributed.

Tom Philion, Dean of the Goodwin College of Education, reported on the college's assessment of an AI policy. At this time, the college has decided not to develop a comprehensive AI policy as other college AI policies and guidance from the Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL) have proven to be sufficient. Rather, the college will seek guidance from programs and departments to develop further statements on AI and allowing faculty to be decision-makers on the acceptable use of AI. Faculty will be discussing and incorporating the statements into their syllabi, with potential in the future for mandatory integration within the college. There's a growing trend of AI integration into education and companies like Microsoft are making significant investments as AI is introducing opportunities in teacher lesson planning and assessment, using tools to create rubrics and map out ideas. The potential for AI to positively impact teaching, learning, and communication does have its drawbacks. To that end, the State Assembly is reviewing draft legislation on AI use in K-12 schools.

Old / New Business

Trustee Kalayil asked if there was any old or new business to address. Hearing none, there was no further business.

Motion to Adjourn

At 3:40 p.m. Trustee Linares, seconded by Trustee Morales, moved to adjourn. The meeting was adjourned by unanimous acclamation.

Respectfully submitted,

Ann Kalayil, Chair of the Committee
Karl Voigt, Assistant Secretary to the Board
Approved June 5, 2025