

Board of Trustees of Northeastern Illinois University
Academic/Student Affairs, Enrollment, and Technology Committee Meeting Minutes
March 25, 2026

A meeting of the Academic/Student Affairs, Enrollment, and Technology Committee of the Board of Trustees of Northeastern Illinois University was convened on Wednesday, March 25, 2026 in the Student Union – Room 217 located at 5500 N. St. Louis Avenue, Chicago, IL 60625. Trustee Kalayil, called the meeting to order to 1:19 p.m.

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

Trustees not present: Carlos Garcia

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

Motion to Permit Remote Participation by Trustees

Trustee Morales, seconded by Trustee Navarrete, moved to permit Trustee Betty Fleurimond to participate in the meeting pursuant to Section 7(a)(ii) of the IL Open Meetings Act and Section 2. A. (2) of the Board's Bylaws.

Discussion: Trustee Fleurimond notified the Assistant Board Secretary in advance of today's meeting requesting to participate in the meeting remotely.

Roll was called and the vote was as follows:

Kalayil: Yes Morales: Yes Navarrete: Yes

The motion carried.

ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION AND POSSIBLE FUTURE ACTION

Action Item: Committee Recommendation to Approve the FY26 Tenure Awards

Trustee Morales, seconded by Trustee Fleurimond, moved to recommend approval of the FY26 Tenure Awards as presented for Dr. Garo Agopian, Dr. Sheng Liu, and Dr. Mohammad Tavakolifar.

Discussion: Pursuant to Northeastern Illinois University Law (110 ILCS 680/25-25), the Student Trustee is not permitted to vote on tenure. Interim Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs, Shayne Cofer, introduced each candidate for tenure and recited their biographies. Trustee Fleurimond expressed gratitude for the opportunity to vote to recommend tenure for these three faculty members. Opportunities like this strengthen the institution's brand and University community through the dedicated work of the faculty.

Roll was called and the vote was as follows:

Fleurimond: Yes Kalayil: Yes Morales: Yes

The motion carried. Trustee Fleurimond left the meeting.

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

Trustee Kalayil announced the opportunity for public comment. There were no registrations placed in advance and no presentations made.

Chair's and President's Remarks

Trustee Kalayil thanked everyone for their flexibility in rescheduling today's meeting to accommodate the tenure recommendations vote.

President Bell-Jordan welcomed everyone on this beautiful spring day. The University is grateful to have the support of the Board in approving its 2026-2031 Strategic Plan and a special appreciation to the many individuals from across the University and from the community for their participation in the creation of the plan. April 16th is higher education equitable funding advocacy day in Springfield. Public universities from across the state will be represented as well as NEIU. NEIU has been called to testify before the Senate and House Appropriations Committees on April 7th and 9th respectively. Several members of the administration will be in Washington D. C. in May for the annual HACU meeting to advocate for HSI and MSI federal funding with elected representatives. Spring commencement is right around the corner on May 15th at the Credit Union One Arena. Several other activities, including Master's Hooding and Academic Honors ceremonies, will be held in the week leading up to graduation.

Committee Charter Review

Trustee Kalayil asked the committee for feedback on her suggested revisions to the current committee charter. The charter can be revised without the need for Board approval.

ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

Academic Affairs

Shayne Cofer reported that starting with the Fall 2026 term, the First Year Experience courses will be a graduation requirement for all new freshmen. The courses have been required for all new freshmen for several years, but did not count toward graduation.

Sudha Srinivas, Acting Associate Provost, reported that the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) completed their multi-site visits to the University's satellite locations; Carruthers Center, El Centro, and the University Center of Lake County. The site visits took place March 9-11 and included interviews with students, faculty, administrators and site directors. These visits are a required part of the University's accreditation review.

Mike Bedell, Dean of the College of Business and Technology, reported that the college continually focuses on ways to facilitate enrollment growth, relevant programs, access, innovation and college-specific marketing initiatives. The college utilizes an executive council to review curriculum relevance, including initiatives like the new computer science degree in AI, currently awaiting HLC approval, and possibly bringing the Human Resources program into the college. The minor in entrepreneurship is being updated to include a new practicum element for both majors and non-majors. The accounting program is returning to 120 credit hours. About 50% of the business courses are now offered online and about 30% of the computer science courses are online. Changes in ACSB accreditation are also driving faculty research, teaching and innovation, which the college is in favor of supporting. The college's arrangement with Coursera is expanding across the University, as well as being integrated into some of the curriculum, and the expansion of professional experiences for students are being coordinated through the B.I.G. Center and neighboring businesses through course projects and other curated opportunities. Other areas being explored are a partnership with the Nontraditional Degree Program for both business and computer science degree completion; Coursera certification programs; and neighborhood-focused "executive education" programs. The college has expanded access to its computer lab by making it cloud based.

Other unique opportunities are expansion of cooperative education agreements to attract foreign students; and the possibility of adding a doctoral program.

Beni Ortiz, Vice President for Finance and Administration, reported on a University initiative that was presented to the Finance, Buildings and Grounds Committee on March 19. The Master of Arts (MA) in Rehabilitation Counseling and the associated Graduate Certificate are currently hybrid programs offered through NEIU's Department of Counselor Education. Both are CACREP-accredited and designed to prepare students for national certification as Certified Rehabilitation Counselors (CRC). Currently, our students are primarily local and attend in-person courses on campus. Similarly, the Masters of Science (MS) in Exercise and Sport Science and the Masters of Public Health (MPH) are two programs in the Health Science and Physical Education department with solid enrollment and growing reputation among our targeted population in the Chicago area. Both of these programs have been delivering content mostly online and intend to fully switch to online modality in the Fall of 2026. Moving these programs to a distance education model is a strategic next step that would expand access, increase flexibility, and support NEIU's broader goals of graduate enrollment growth, equity, and national reach.

Peer institutions have shared their experiences: in-person program enrollments are declining, while online and distance-learning formats are seeing steady growth. These trends reinforce the urgency of transitioning to a distance learning model for all three programs to remain competitive and accessible. NEIU's current in-state tuition of approximately \$540.89 per credit is extremely competitive, especially when considering the cost of living in the Chicago area. Extending in-state tuition to all distance-learning Rehabilitation Counseling students regardless of geographic location, would position NEIU as one of the most affordable and accessible CACREP-accredited RC programs in the nation. Extending the same arrangement for the MS in Exercise and Sport Science and the MPH would also allow these programs to expand their reach to other populations across the US and abroad.

The University has received the Finance, Buildings and Grounds Committee's recommendation to approve offering in-state tuition for these three graduate programs to all new students beginning in the Fall 2026 term for a 3-year pilot. In Fall 2028, the University will assess the marketing and enrollment progress of the programs to determine next steps. The committee discussed the merits of this and thanked the administration for their forward-looking enrollment opportunities, especially opportunities to expand the University's reach outside of the Chicagoland area.

Enrollment Management and Student Success and Retention

Claudia Mercado, Interim Vice President for Enrollment Management, asked Ryan Trout, Director of Undergraduate Admissions, to provide an update on the Fall 2026 enrollment. Thanks to the IBHE's support for the Illinois Common App and One-Click Admit, applications and admission figures are seeing a significant increase over last year. The University is working hard to convert the admitted individuals into enrolled students and expects these new initiatives will continue to market NEIU to all graduating Illinois high school students, further expanding NEIU's traditional reach. The University has enhanced its partnership with City Colleges of Chicago (CCC), and as a result, NEIU has seen a rise in the number of transfer students enrolling. CCC reports that NEIU is now their number 2 preferred public University in Chicago for sending transfer students. Re-Up is the IBHE's third initiative to entice students who have stopped out to complete their degrees. College and university participation in this initiative is voluntary and NEIU opted in and is seeing a notable increase in interest from prior students in re-enrolling, as well as a 21% increase in re-enrollees in the Spring 2026 term. All of these re-enrolled students are as a result of the Re-Up initiative. Preview Days participation has dropped off significantly due to ICE concerns, and international student enrollment has also dropped off significantly.

Tim Sheahan, Director of Graduate Admissions, reported that graduate admission for Fall 2026 is up over last year, despite inquiries being down slightly. The dip in inquiries appears to hover over international

inquiries, which tracks generally with the national trend in reduction of international student applications overall. The Master of Social Work (MSW) program is by far the most popular. The new Ed.D. program is generating a lot of interest. Currently there are 5 admitted students and another 18 in the admissions pipeline. March 26 will be the Ed.D. program's launch celebration with 47 registered to attend. The University continues to add certificate programs across the colleges which are also generating quite a bit of interest. The additional graduate recruitment and admissions staff are adding a lot of value.

Irma Ortiz, Interim Associate Vice President for Student Success and Retention, reported that the early intervention accounts receivable hold pilot program continues to bear fruit. Not only has this initiative helped recover hundreds of thousands of dollars of outstanding tuition and fee income, it has significantly helped students continue their education, uninterrupted, from semester to semester. The Fall 2025 to Spring 2026 retention is 80%, a slight increase over same time last year. Student affinity programs have shown the highest retention semester-to-semester and year-over-year. Faculty who complete NEIUstar student progress surveys help the early intervention team identify students who are falling behind academically and direct them to the resources they need to succeed. Faculty survey participation is slightly better this term than last.

Student Affairs

Terry Mena, Vice President for Student Affairs and Dean of Students, introduced Brandon Johnson, the new Director of Housing and Residence Life, to present the Nest report. There are currently 340 leases for the Spring 2026 term, representing an 80.1% occupancy rate, against the goal of 80% occupancy. This is up slightly from Spring 2025. The University continues to collect on outstanding lease amounts, and continues to work with the staff of American Campus Communities to assume full control of the facility beginning May 31, 2026.

Technology

Eliot Rodriguez, Chief Information Officer, reviewed the University's current technology initiatives. Workday Finance is set to go live on July 1, 2026. The end-to-end testing is approximately 66% completed. User training programs are happening across the University in anticipation of the changeover.

New Business

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

Motion to Adjourn

At 3:45 p.m. p.m. Trustee Navarrete, 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 April 16, 2026