

Board of Trustees of Northeastern Illinois University
Regular Board Meeting Minutes
April 16, 2026

A regular meeting of the Board of Trustees of Northeastern Illinois University was convened on Thursday, April 16, 2026 in the Student Union Alumni Hall North located at 5500 N. St. Louis Avenue, Chicago, IL 60625. Trustee J. Todd Phillips, Chair of the Board, called the meeting to order at 1:07 p.m.

Roll was called and the following Trustees were present: Carlos Garcia; Ann Gariti; Ann Kalayil; Jorge Leon; Anna Meresidis; Michelle Morales; Daniela Navarrete; and Paula Wolff

The following Trustee was not present: Betty Fleurimond

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

Administration of Past Meeting Minutes and Records

Trustee Wolff, seconded by Trustee Morales, moved to approve the open and closed minutes and to keep the closed minutes closed for the February 19, 2026 Regular Board meeting, the March 19, 2026 Finance, Buildings and Grounds Committee, and the March 25, 2026 Academic/Student Affairs, Enrollment and Technology Committee meeting pursuant to Sections 2.06(b) and 2.06(c)(2) of the Illinois Open Meetings Act.

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

Trustee Wolff, seconded by Trustee Garcia, moved pursuant to Section 2.06(d) of the Illinois Open Meetings Act, that the confidential written minutes of the closed session portions of the March 13, 2025 Academic/Student Affairs, Enrollment and Technology Committee meeting and Finance, Buildings and Grounds Committee meeting require confidential treatment and will remain confidential.

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 4 registrations place in advance and 3 presentations made.

1. **Henry Stewart**, representing himself
Topic: Civil Service parental leave
2. **Heather Carper**, representing herself and AFSCME Local 1989
Topic: facility conditions
3. **Xiwei Wang**, representing the Faculty Senate
Topic: sharing a statement adopted by the Senate in support of the higher ed equitable funding bill

Chair's and President's Remarks

President Bell-Jordan echoed an earlier welcome to new Trustee Ann Gariti. Today is Higher Education Advocacy Day in Springfield, to advocate with other universities from across the state for adequate and equitable funding for Illinois universities, particularly MSIs and HSIs. Vice President Liesl Downey, Interim Executive Director for Government Relations, Blanca Jara, and several faculty, staff, students, retirees, and community members are proudly representing NEIU. On April 7th and 9th NEIU testified before the House and Senate appropriations committees and had the opportunity to visit with elected officials from across the state, some of those who represent NEIU. Dr. Bell-Jordan co-authored an op-ed in Crain's Chicago Business along with presidents Z Scott from Chicago State University and Joyce Ester from

Governors State University, and Karen Freeman-Wilson, president and CEO of the Chicago Urban League advocating for the adequate and equitable funding formula currently working its way through the Legislature. Other University advocacy efforts include participation in the upcoming HACU Capitol Forum in Washington, D.C. University officials will meet with legislators to advocate for higher education, MSIs and HSIs. NEIU officials will host a NEIU Alumni celebration in Washington D.C. and will be joined by retiring senator, Dick Durbin. Northeastern will have a strong presence at Latino Unity Day and higher education policy panels in Springfield on May 5th. These efforts aim to strengthen advocacy for the University and its students. Dr. Bell-Jordan congratulated the Computer Science program on the recent HLC approval of the new Bachelor of Science in Artificial Intelligence, launching in Fall 2026. The Spring term is coming to a close with commencement exercises taking place on May 15th at the Credit Union One Arena. The commencement speaker will be award-winning author, scholar and NEIU alumna, Dr. Kyanga Yamatta Taylor.

Chair Phillips thanked everyone involved in the advocacy efforts surrounding the equitable funding bill and expressed gratitude for the many partnerships and collaborations with other universities and state officials. The importance of equitable funding for all universities in the state will ensure access to quality education for all citizens. Chair Phillips echoed President Bell-Jordan's remarks about commencement being less than a month away. This very special occasion is an opportunity to celebrate the achievements of students and their families. Chair Phillips encouraged everyone to attend and support the graduates.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Academic/Student Affairs, Enrollment and Technology Committee

Trustee Ann Kalayil reported that the Academic/Student Affairs, Enrollment and Technology Committee met on March 25, 2026. The committee has one item for Board approval today.

Action Item I. A. Board Action on Committee Recommendation Regarding the FY26 Tenure Awards

Trustee Kalayil, seconded by Trustee Morales, moved to adopt the Academic/Student Affairs, Enrollment and Technology Committee's recommendation to approve the FY26 tenure awards for Dr. Garo Agopian, Assistant Professor in the Management and Marketing Department, College of Business and Technology; Dr. Sheng Liu, Assistant Professor in the Business Law, Accounting and Finance Department, College of Business and Technology; and Dr. Mohammad Tavakolifar, Assistant Professor in the Business Law, Accounting and Finance Department, College of Business and Technology.

Discussion: Interim Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs, Shayne Cofer, introduced the three candidates and read their biographies.

Roll was called and the vote was as follows:*

Garcia: Yes	Kalayil: Yes	Meresidis: Yes	Navarrete:	Wolff: Yes
Gariti: Yes	Leon: Yes	Morales: Yes	Phillips: Yes	

** Pursuant to Section 25-25 of Northeastern Illinois University Law (110 ILCS 680), the student trustee is not permitted to vote on tenure.*

The motion carried. Provost Cofer presented each newly tenured faculty member with their tenure pin. Trustees congratulated the newly tenured faculty members.

Trustee Kalayil reported on the committee's other information briefings which included new graduation requirements for incoming freshmen, a presentation on a pilot tuition program for three online only courses,

future enrollment projections and retention successes, an update on the Nest operations, and an update on technology initiatives currently underway.

Finance, Buildings and Grounds Committee

Chair Phillips reported that the Finance, Buildings and Grounds Committee met on March 19, 2026 and has two items to present for Board action today.

Action Item I. B. Board Action on Committee Recommendation Regarding the University's Revised Investment Policy

Trustee Phillips, seconded by Trustee Wolff, moved to adopt the Finance, Buildings and Grounds Committee's recommendation to approve the University's revised investment policy.

Discussion: NEIU is proposing a shift in cash management strategy, moving from a pooled fund to hiring an investment broker or manager. This change aims to increase control over cash investments, improve returns, and maintain liquidity. The board will retain full fiduciary authority and oversight, and the decision to hire an investment manager will be guided by a formal RFP process.

NEIU is looking to an Assets Under Management (AUM) model, following the example of three other Illinois public universities. The University obtained a legal opinion from a noted tax attorney who confirmed there are no tax implications for the transition, and any vendor contract will include a "cancellation for convenience" provision. Under an AUM model, the Board will be more actively involved in investment decisions, with a recommended five-year evaluation period to assess performance and make adjustments as needed.

The University is recommending this change to the current investment strategy to allow for more control over investments and the potential to leverage the guidance of an investment firm. The proposed policy change includes a new governance structure and the possibility of managing investments internally. The Board requested further information on the RFP process, management fee structures, and the appropriate level of governance involvement they should expect.

Roll was called and the vote was as follows:

Garcia: Yes Kalayil: Yes Meresidis: Yes Navarrete: Yes Wolff: Yes

Gariti: Yes Leon: Yes Morales: Yes Phillips: Yes

The motion carried.

Action Item I. C. Board Action on Committee Recommendation Regarding FY27 Tuition Rates for Distance Learning Programs

Trustee Phillips, seconded by Trustee Kalayil, moved to adopt the Finance, Buildings and Grounds Committee's recommendation to approve tuition rates for a pilot program for the following three distance learning master's degree programs beginning in FY27: M.A. in Rehabilitation Counseling; M.S. in Exercise and Sport Science; and Master's in Public Health. The pilot tuition program will run for three years and be evaluated in its third year for further consideration.

Discussion: The University is proposing setting a single tuition rate for three online only master's degree programs, regardless of residency, to expand access and support enrollment growth. A three-year pilot program to begin in Fall 2026 is expected to be sufficient time to market and test this approach. To break even, enrollment of out-of-state and international students must double, which is considered achievable based on prevailing trends for similar programs. Trustees clarified that with this pilot program they are

making a rate determination only, to be equivalent to the applicable in-state tuition rate, and not a residency determination.

Roll was called and the vote was as follows:

Garcia: Yes	Kalayil: Yes	Meresidis: Yes	Navarrete: Yes	Wolff: Yes
Gariti: Yes	Leon: Yes	Morales: Yes	Phillips: Yes	

The motion carried.

ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

Information Item II. A. Board Regulations Revision: Parental Leave (First Reading)

Vice President for Finance and Administration, Beni Ortiz, presented a proposed version of language to revise the current Parental Leave benefit outlined in the Board's Regulations, Section 2. Employees, Sub-section B. Faculty and Administrative, 6. Employee Benefits, F. Parental Leave, and Section 2. Employees, Sub-section C. Civil Service, 7. Employee Benefits, E. Parental Leave.

Current language in both Faculty and Administrative and Civil Service sections of the regulations:

"An employee may use up to 20 days of earned sick leave per calendar year for parental leave upon the birth of a child by the employee or the employee's spouse or the adoption of a child by the employee. Requests for parental leave of more than 10 days shall be submitted to the employer representative 30 days in advance, except in cases of emergency. Non-emergency requests for parental leave of more than 10 days shall be subject to the consideration of maintaining efficiency of operations."

Proposed change to both Faculty and Administrative and Civil Service regulations:

*Employees who have completed one (1) year of employment shall be **eligible for up to six (6) consecutive weeks of paid parental leave or up to thirty (30) consecutive workdays, provided that such leave shall start within thirty (30) days of the birth/adoption/fostering of the child and further provided that the child is co-resident with the employee. An employee may use up to 20 days of earned sick leave per calendar year for parental leave upon the birth of a child by the employee or the employee's spouse or the adoption of a child by the employee.*** Requests for parental leave of more than 10 days shall be submitted to the President 30 days in advance, except in cases of emergency. Non-emergency requests for parental leave of more than 10 days shall be subject to the consideration of maintaining efficiency of operations.

The proposed change is being recommended to the parental leave benefit for non-negotiated employees in the Administrative & Professional and Civil Service classifications to align with parental leave benefits afforded to negotiated employees. Trustees agreed this is an important revision and received a briefing on the Board's rules for updating or revising their governing documents. After some discussion, the Board opted to invoke its authority pursuant to Section 1. Board Procedures, Sub-section C. Adoption, Amendment or Repeal of Board Regulations, 4. to forgo a second hearing and adopt the change immediately.

Trustee Kalayil, seconded by Trustee Meresidis, moved to adopt the change to the parental leave benefit recommended by the President for non-negotiated employees in the Board's regulations as noted above.

Roll was called and the vote was as follows:

Garcia: Yes Kalayil: Yes Meresidis: Yes Navarrete: Yes Wolff: Yes
Gariti: Yes Leon: Yes Morales: Yes Phillips: Yes

The motion carried. The change will take effect immediately.

Motion to Convene in Closed Session

At 2:47 p.m. Trustee Wolff, seconded by Trustee Morales, moved to convene in Closed Session pursuant to Sections 2(c)2 and 2(c)11 of the Illinois Open Meetings Act.

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

Fleurimond: Gariti: Yes Leon: Yes Morales: Yes Phillips: Yes
Garcia: Yes Kalayil: Yes Meresidis: Yes Navarrete: Yes Wolff: Yes

The motion carried. The audience left the room.

Motion to Reconvene in Open Session

At 3:21 p.m. Trustee Gariti, seconded by Trustee Wolff, moved to reconvene in Open Session. The motion carried by unanimous acclamation.

Legal Report

Chair Phillips announced that the Board received a copy of the University's legal report in advance of today's meeting and had an opportunity to discuss it and ask questions in Closed Session.

New Business

Chair Phillips asked if there was any new business.

- Academic Honors Program on Monday, May 11 at 6:00 p.m. in the Sasha Gerritson Auditorium
- Master's Hooding Ceremonies on Tuesday, May 12, 2026 at 5:30p and 7:30p in the Sasha Gerritson Auditorium. Trustee attendance is requested, but not required.
- Next Board Committee meetings at the main campus:
 - Audit Committee and Finance, Buildings and Grounds Committee joint meeting
 - Academic/Student Affairs, Enrollment, and Technology Committee on Thursday, May 14, 2026
- May Commencement Exercises, May 15, 2026 at the Credit Union1 Arena, 2:00 p.m.
- Next Regular Board Meeting: June 11, 2026 in the Donn F. Bailey Legacy Hall at the Jacob H. Carruthers Center for Inner City Studies
- Save the Date: Kane Golf Outing, Monday August 3, 2026 at the Preserve at Oak Meadows
- The deadline for filing your 2 statements of economic interests is May 1 by 11:59 p.m.
- Karl announced that 2027 calendar invitations will be sent out shortly.

There was no further business.

Motion to Adjourn

At 3:33 p.m. Trustee Wolff, seconded by Trustee Garcia, moved to adjourn. The meeting was adjourned by unanimous acclamation.

Respectfully submitted,

J. Todd Phillips, Chair of the Board
Karl Voigt, Assistant Secretary to the Board
Approved June 11, 2026