

Board of Trustees of Northeastern Illinois University

**Academic/Student Affairs, Enrollment, and Technology Committee**  
**Meeting Minutes**  
January 14, 2021

A meeting of the Academic/Student Affairs, Enrollment, and Technology Committee of the Board of Trustees of Northeastern Illinois University was convened on Thursday January 14, 2021 via video conference. Trustee Ann Kalayil called the meeting to order at 8:31 a.m.

**The following Trustee committee members were in attendance:** Marvin Garcia, Gabriela Loredo, and Ann Kalayil

**Other Trustees present:** Carlos Azcoitia; Sherry Eagle, and Jonathan Stein

**Others in attendance:** Dr. Gloria Gibson, President; Mary Pat Burns, Board Counsel; Karl Voigt, Assistant Secretary to the Board; vice presidents, and members of the University community.

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**Opportunity for Public Comment**

Trustee Kalayil announced the opportunity for public comment. There was 1 request to speak.

1. **Dr. Timothy Scherman**, NEIU Faculty & Chair of English and Linguistics Departments  
**Topic:** to encourage faster outward facing marketing and enrollment services functions

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President Gibson announced that the IBHE met on January 13 and recommended a 2.1% increase in Northeastern's appropriation for next fiscal year. An announcement about the next Vice President for Student Affairs/Dean of Students may be made by next week. The Associate Vice President for Enrollment Services search committee is presenting four finalist candidates for virtual campus interviews next week. In February or March, the University will begin a search for an Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Officer; a first for this type of position. Overall Spring enrollment is down 2.8%, an improvement over the forecast. Spring enrollment for the Goodwin College of Education enrollment is up 12.1%.

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Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs, Dennis Rome, presented the current and upcoming program review updates. In 2019-2020, the Psychology, Communication, Media and Theater, and Mathematics programs all completed their self-studies and submitted to the IBHE. Due to COVID-19, the external review completions are being delayed. In 2020-2021, the Philosophy and TESOL programs are in the process of completing their self-studies for submission to the IBHE in September. The programs up for review in 2021-2022 are World Languages and Cultures, Accounting, Finance, Management, Marketing, General Business Administration, and the Masters in Business Administration.

Dr. Rome gave an overview of the current model for academic planning. The purpose is to develop curriculum in an historical, political, and social context, and include the following elements: culturally responsive teaching; creation of innovative programming; career development and placement; mentoring, faculty exchanges; orientation, and learning communities.

The Dean of the College of Business and Management (COBM), Mike Bedell, presented an update on curriculum changes within the college. The entire M.B.A. program is being updated to be online with webcast capabilities, and is adding new elective tracks of Technology and Data

Analytics. The B.S. in Management will offer a Joint Data Analytics major with classes in accounting, computer science, finance, management, and marketing. Minors are currently being reviewed.

As of this academic year, the Computer Science program has moved from the College of Arts and Sciences to COBM. The M.S. in Computer Science program is now offering a Cyber Security path. Accordingly, the B.S. in Computer Science is offering two new majors in Cyber Security and Joint Data Analytics. In addition to the computer science courses in the Joint Data Analytics major, students will also take classes in accounting, finance, management, and marketing.

The M.S. and B.S. in Accounting are being updated to reflect the technology requirements in the CPA exam. Exploration of a Forensic Accounting program is being reviewed. Currently, the college is re-examining the 4+1 curriculum model in the B.S. program, and the Forensic Accounting minor is being revised.

Vice President for Finance and Administration, Manish Kumar, introduced the University's Interim Chief Information Officer (CIO), Marsha Henfer. Ms. Henfer presented a report on the current activities in University Technology Services (UTS). There is a continued effort to align the University's technology in support of its strategic goals through purposeful personnel appointments to key roles, the ongoing effort to move the University toward digitized processes, development of a comprehensive strategic roadmap, realignment of UTS, and proactive and responsible operational and fiscal planning.

In response to these developments, UTS created and launched a Project Management office on November 23 to oversee the implementation of the stated initiatives, and has hired a Security Information Officer (SIO) to address audit concerns, protection of University intellectual property, ensure compliance with state mandates, and provide appropriate training and education resources. Ms. Henfer reviewed a partial portfolio of current activities and programs being undertaken with timelines, and an analysis of the University's current technology services Help Desk incident ticketing system. The next steps and priorities are to continue UTS realignment, deliver an audit findings and strategic recommendations response document, and continue to invest in critical areas of technology infrastructure.

John Fraire, Interim Associate Vice President for Enrollment Services, presented the Customer Relationship Management (CRM) System report. As reported at the October 22, 2020 committee meeting, the University needs to modernize its customer relationship management (CRM) system software to meet modern enrollment communications and data operations.

The Enrollment Services office currently uses Ellucian Recruit CRM. Purchased in 2014, Recruit was the University's first CRM system. The University implemented only the base product version of Recruit CRM, meaning key features such as document imaging, financial aid award information, connection to reporting and texting tools were left out. Even after regular consultation with Ellucian these issues have not been resolved (e.g., the integration systems have to be restarted daily, often twice daily) resulting in intensive manual and duplicate entry efforts by the Admissions team to ensure that the data is accurate and reaches Banner. This adds additional personnel hours in developing workarounds; time that could be better spent processing new applications. Additionally, the integration of the CRM to Cognos was not completed, which has hampered the University's ability to create meaningful reports to help with strategic recruitment and admissions decisions.

The Admissions Office has had to overcome these technology hurdles by building out its own manual systems and technical infrastructure to extract and manage necessary data. The significant limitations of the current CRM meant that two weeks after the University went remote this past Spring, the admissions processing team had to return to the office because the current operation requires hands-on processing. A critical function to a fully implemented CRM is integrated workflows that get electronic admission files and decision forms to the right people who can easily make admission recommendations, and who can do so remotely.

These complications will be resolved by a new CRM and will provide an enhanced experience for the staff, and more importantly, for prospective students. Prospective students can apply, upload and track admission documents, accept admission offers, view their financial aid awards, chat with admission personnel, and receive targeted information about majors in ways they prefer. Robust communication features such as texting, and graphics and templates that can be NEIU-branded, help students keep NEIU on their minds. Targeted and animated communications further enhance the student experience with sounds and visuals when their electronic admissions correspondence is delivered, leaving a memorable and lasting impression. Modern CRMs with robust reporting tools and dashboards allow for accurate monitoring of applicants and admits, ensuring the University is meeting targets and goals, and helping to better forecast enrollment.

Trustees on this committee support advancing this request to the Finance, Buildings and Grounds Committee for them to recommend final purchase approval.

John Fraire reported that the nationwide trend for new enrollments, including NEIU, are down. The pandemic has made it difficult to predict enrollment, but looking ahead to Fall 2021 there are some positives.

In the long view, NEIU faces bleak demographic trends. Except for a small increase around 2030, the number of high school graduates in Illinois will continue to decline through 2036, and the declining numbers are even greater for Chicago public schools. This decline is representative of all ethnic and racial groups. The Latino student population will grow for a couple more years, and then will uniformly decline. In another bleak demographic, the filing of FAFSA's by incoming freshmen has dropped about 14% nationally and over 20% for communities of color and other poor communities. These trends are the same among transfer students. There has been a 120,000 head count decrease in just five years among Illinois community colleges, and it will continue.

Currently, the freshmen applications and admits for Fall 2021 are running approximately 32% behind last year. In previous years, however, freshmen application numbers were artificially inflated due in part to a CPS policy that required students to apply to a set number of schools even if a student was not interested in that school. Working remotely, many CPS students did not follow that policy this past year, meaning the freshmen admitted students for Fall 2021 are students sincerely interested in NEIU. The University can focus on these students and this is a sign that Fall 2021 looks promising.

Graduate enrollment continues with strong increases for the third straight year. This past fall, NEIU's increase in new graduate enrollment was the largest percentage increase in the state at +10.2% (176). As well, for several years the re-admit rates have increased, which improves graduation rates. In spite of the declining community college enrollments, transfer applications to NEIU are trending better than anticipated. A challenge for transfer students this year has been

the completion of the transfer credit evaluations; a process crippled by COVID. The University is recommending changes to address this interruption in the transfer process going forward.

NEIU recently initiated a successful “Return to NEIU” program to engage re-admits; students who left NEIU with outstanding balances and did not complete a degree elsewhere. The University was able to use GEER funds to remove some of the debt for those returning students. This was one-time money not available for future terms, but the University is exploring other options to increase revenue by bringing back departed students. This is a promising market for NEIU and could gain more enrollment by aggressively recruiting this group.

To respond to the many trends affecting enrollment, the University hired an enrollment consultant to conduct an audit of enrollment services. The final report will be available shortly, and while it will outline strengths and opportunities for NEIU, it will lay out a three-year course of action for future growth that the University and new AVP will be able to use in moving enrollment forward.

Associate Provost for Student Success, Frank Gaytan, presented an updated retention report. Final retention rate for the 2019 freshman class was 66.9%. Fall 2020 to Spring 2021 retention is 74.4%. Students have experienced several challenges this past year, the pandemic being a significant one. The spin-off effects of the pandemic have been financial hardships, virtual learning fatigue, and mental health and wellness. A notable predictor of higher retention is early registration. The registration curve this year has remained flatter and only picked up strength closer to the start of classes. This outcome, along with feedback from Advisors, indicates that students are holding off or not registering at all. This trend is also being seen nationwide. The retention team is working to re-engage students strategically through financial aid as they return to face-to-face instruction in Fall 2021. In addition, making improvements to the placement process, and in First Year Experience (FYE) and orientation for Fall 2021. Finally, work continues on enhancing developmental education courses.

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

Trustee Kalayil asked if there was any old or new business. The next committee meeting will be March 18, 2021. There was no further business.

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### **Motion to Adjourn**

At 10:14 a.m., Trustee Garcia, seconded by Trustee Kalayil, moved to adjourn. The meeting was adjourned by acclamation.

Respectfully submitted,

Ann Kalayil, Committee Chair  
Karl Voigt, Assistant Board Secretary  
Approved February 11, 2021