

NORTHERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY
BOARD OF TRUSTEES
Minutes of the Formal Session
of
Tuesday, June 30, 2020

A formal session of the Board of Trustees of Northern Michigan University was held on Tuesday, June 30, 2020, in Marquette, Michigan. The meeting was convened at 9:03 a.m. by Chair Steven M. Mitchell.

Trustees present included:

Mr. Steven M. Mitchell, Chair	Ms. Donna L. Murray-Brown
Ms. Lisa I. Fittante*	Ms. Tami M. Seavoy, Vice Chair
Ms. Alexis M. Hart	Mr. Stephen E. Young
Mr. James K. Haveman	Dr. Fritz J Erickson, ex officio
Mr. Robert E. Mahaney	

**via Zoom video conference*

Senior Staff and Counsel present included:

Mr. Brad Canale, Chief Executive Officer – NMU Foundation
Mr. R. Gavin Leach, Vice President for Finance and Administration and Treasurer of the Board of Trustees
Dr. Kerri Schuiling, Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs
Dr. Steven VandenAvond, Vice President for Extended Learning and Community Engagement
Ms. Deanna Hemmila, Executive Director – Board/Government Relations
Ms. Cathy A. Andrew, Secretary of the Board of Trustees
Mr. Kurt McCamman, Legal Counsel

ROLL CALL

Secretary Andrew took roll call of the Trustees and noted that a quorum was met with all Trustees being present.

MOTION TO APPROVE AGENDA

The following action was taken:

It was moved by Trustee Young, seconded by Trustee Murray-Brown, and supported by a vote of 8 – 0, to amend the agenda to combine Item 5 (Finance Committee Report) and Item 7 (Tuition Setting).

INDIVIDUAL REQUESTS TO ADDRESS THE BOARD

Dr. Dwight Brady, President of the local chapter of the American Association of University Professors (AAUP), addressed the Board regarding the contract negotiation. Brady thanked the board members and administration for working with them during a less than ideal period for contract negotiations over the past few months. AAUP look forward to working with everyone in the near future in a spirit of shared governance and mutual respect. Brady said the one-year tentative agreement the union will be voting on later today demonstrates the union's willingness

to make short-term sacrifices as everyone figures out the COVID-19 crisis, while at the same time it preserves both the long-term investments they believe are essential for recruiting and retaining top tier faculty to the institution. Brady said it's not just about labor, it's about talent – the level of talent that is put in front of the students every day will have major impact on NMU's ability to successfully move forward into the 21st century. Brady said part of that success will also depend on contingent faculty who make up approximately 20% of the union membership. Dr. Brady introduced Ms. Jamie Kuehnl, a contingent faculty member, who spoke on behalf of those members.

Ms. Kuehnl said contingent faculty refer to themselves as the “precariat” as their positions from year-to-year and semester-to-semester are precarious – rarely knowing if they will receive a contract or not. Kuehnl touched on the following points related to her position as a contingent faculty member:

- Teaches nearly the same number of credits as full time faculty – averaging 23.95 credits per year – for the last 10 years
- Engages in service and professional development
- Annual earnings regularly fall below the federal poverty level
- Some additional problems contingent faculty face are they often cannot secure loans for mortgages as their positions are deemed “temporary”
- As a single parent, the court based the child support her daughter receives on what an average person with a graduate degree should be making instead of what she is actually making
- Her story is not unique for contingent faculty
- Ideal remedy would be some semblance of job security that bridges some of the vast pay and benefit chasms between full and part time faculty,
 - A simple action that could have great impact – recognition for their years of service to NMU – vanquishing the misnomer that part time equates to temporary
- Reality is there are over 30 contingent faculty who have been teaching at NMU between 10 and 30 years
 - Longevity of their positions proves not only their success in the classroom and in their scholarship, but also their deep dedication to NMU, the amazing students who are drawn here, as well as a love for teaching.

Chair Mitchell thanked both Dr. Brady and Ms. Kuehnl for their comments. He also thanked Dr. Brady and the negotiating team for the work with the contract negotiations.

FINANCE COMMITTEE REPORT AND TUITION SETTING

Trustee Young, Chair of the Finance Committee, reported on a meeting held June 29, 2020. A copy of the report is appended to these minutes. (Addendum #1)

Based on a recommendation from the Finance Committee, the following special action was taken:

It was moved by Trustee Young and seconded by Trustee Hart that the Board approve the following tuition rate adjustments for Fiscal Year 2020-2021:

- A. Increase the average resident and non-resident undergraduate on campus tuition and fees rate by \$215 per semester.**
- B. Utilize its university financial aid funds in the fiscal year 2020-21 budget to provide emergency COVID-19 aid to help families and reduce the actual increase billed by \$100 and produce an effective tuition and fee rate increase of \$115 per semester. This aid should be automatically applied to the student account.**
- C. Create a \$115 grant for eligible students using federal monies dedicated for COVID-19 disruption relief which will be paid directly to the students.**
- D. Adjust graduate tuition, off campus courses, global campus, summer session, differential tuition, and other fees rates at the amounts on file with the Secretary of the Board.**

Discussion followed:

Trustee Young said the Finance Committee, with a lot of input from the full Board and administration, looked at several options and spent a lot of time discussing this issue. This proposal hits a few key points: Firstly, we have a responsibility to the financial stability of the institution and believe this rate increase, while coming at a difficult time, is important to the university moving forward for the financial stability of the university, which was one of the factors in the committee's discussions. Secondly, and equally important, was the consideration of the financial difficulties our students and their families face in these times, and what could we do to mitigate the impact of this increase. Utilizing some funds that are available through the university, as well as some COVID-19 funding, we have been able to effectively reduce this down to a zero percent increase for the coming semester and, hopefully, do the same thing for the winter that will be dependent upon the financial situation moving forward. He said the committee thinks we have accomplished the goal. He encouraged the board to support this motion.

Being no further discussion, Chair Mitchell called the vote:

On a roll-call vote, the Board voted as follows:

Aye

Nay

Lisa I. Fittante
Alexis M. Hart
James K. Haveman
Robert E. Mahaney
Steven M. Mitchell
Donna L. Murray-Brown
Tami M. Seavoy
Stephen E. Young

Chair Mitchell thanked everyone for the hard work that was done regarding this complex subject. He said we are looking at some financial difficulties for the university, but are also very mindful of the fact that almost every county in the Upper Peninsula has some deep financial problems, as does Michigan with one of the highest unemployment rates in the country – in the top 4 or 5. He believes this is an excellent solution to a difficult problem.

ACTION ON FORMAL RECOMMENDATIONS

The following action was taken:

It was moved by Trustee Seavoy and seconded by Trustee Hart to approve the Formal Recommendations. (Addendum #2)

On a roll-call vote, the Board voted as follows:

Aye

Nay

Lisa I. Fittante
Alexis M. Hart
James K. Haveman
Robert E. Mahaney
Steven M. Mitchell
Donna L. Murray-Brown
Tami M. Seavoy
Stephen E. Young

ANNOUNCEMENT OF INFORMAL CLOSED SESSIONS TO BE HELD IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE THURSDAY – FRIDAY, JULY 30 – 31, 2020 SESSIONS OF THE BOARD

President Erickson made this announcement for the public record.

GOOD OF THE ORDER

Chair Mitchell opened the floor to the Trustees for Good of the Order.

Trustee Mahaney made the following comments:

- He acknowledged the hard work everyone at the university has done in preparing for the fall semester. He believes the university will be very well prepared – there will be some challenges and opportunities that will come out of this but will make the university stronger and better. He is very pleased with the response the entire university has had with the COVID-19 crises
- He said with respect to the tuition rates that was just passed – the U.P., which represents almost half of the student population demographically, has been hit hard with COVID – tourism is a huge part of the Upper Peninsula’s economic engine and nationwide over 70% of people engaged in hospitality/tourism have lost their jobs – some have come back – but our U.P. families and students are being hit particularly hard by COVID – as well as those down state. He said he struggled with any tuition increase but thinks the plan is a good plan and is very pleased this board adopted it.
- He said one of the outcomes from this experience in working on the tuition and budget challenges the university has been faced with over the past few months and the significant

cuts the university has had to make, has given him a greater appreciation for the tremendously strong financial stewardship this university has had and enjoys – because of that the university is better equipped to deal with the financial crises that the state is undergoing.

Trustee Haveman commented on the following:

- He thanked Trustee Young as the chair of the Finance Committee for taking on the challenges of working with the administration to make sure we came up with the motion today and it sends a clear message of where the board and administration is – this is about students.
- He said COVID-19 is one of the biggest challenges we've had and we need to go into it in an optimistic way – it's going to take everyone – faculty, administration, students, etc. – participating with the same goal for a safe campus as it relates to healthcare. This is about health and the university and students having the experience of a university. He said we have a lot of work in the months ahead but he's optimistic of the plan of the work groups and the people who have worked on this that this is doable. He thanked the university for the expenditures its made to date to be prepared – this is the only way this will work.

Trustee Hart touched on the following:

- She is extremely impressed by the focus, response, and empathy with respect to the situation we have as a university, as a community, and the precautions that are being taken to bring the students back in the fall.
- She is pleased we are able to offer face-to-face instruction – the university has done everything to ensure we are prepared to bring the students back on campus and that we will have the ability to adapt and adjust in any situation that may arise
- She thanked the finance committee and administration for their assistance in crafting a tuition package that is sympathetic to the economic situation and being able to have a neutral impact to our students as we move forward.

Trustee Murray-Brown made the following comments:

- She is appreciative of the thoughtfulness and leadership of the finance committee and administration in bringing us to a point that we can provide something meaningful as it relates to tuition for our students and their families.
- She said this is her second in-person meeting and noted that doing this in the midst of COVID-19 is an example of the thoughtfulness and care the staff, administration, and board has taken in bringing everyone back together face-to-face and exemplifies our commitment to the community and our students – she is delighted to be working with a great group who care so deeply.
- She thanked the staff who created the opportunity to meet in person and to demonstrate that we are moving forward with thoughtfulness, care, safety, and health at heart and with optimism and innovation.

Trustee Young made the following comments:

- He thanked everyone for their help with the tuition process – patience, guidance, and input – as it was a difficult issue to tackle because of what we are facing – not only the university but the students and their families.

- He said he is appreciative of all the work that went into making this face-to-face meeting possible – being compliant with social distancing, masks, etc. – it gives the board a flavor for what the students will face when they return to campus.

Trustee Fittante made the following comments:

- She thanked everyone for the opportunity to participate via Zoom.
- She is appreciative, happy, and impressed by all the hard work by the administration, faculty, and staff during the past three months getting the campus ready for classes in the fall.

Trustee Seavoy touched on the following:

- She said she appreciates the ability of being back in person as the robust conversation you can have face-to-face and the ability to understand better the perspective of others is better in person.
- She thanked the IT staff for being here and making this face-to-face meeting possible.

Trustee Mitchell made the following comments:

- He said we are here because it's important to be on campus to develop an understanding of what's going on.
- He said he's been on the board for 7-1/2 years – you can be on for 70-1/2 years and never face the type of difficult decisions the university has had to make this year. He said this is an unusual time – if you look back on how NMU handled this pandemic, he doesn't believe any university handled it better. We made the decision to keep NMU open during the time we went to online teaching, we allowed those who wanted to stay in the in the residence halls to do so, and those who wanted to continue to use the food service could do so. The faculty, in lighting speed – between Thursday and Monday – moved to online education, remoted learning, and did a tremendous job. He said what Fritz and his team has done – where we are as opposed to other schools – has been done despite the fact we have the second lowest tuition in the state for the past 17 years. NMU has done a much better jobs as stewards of that money than other schools. He thanked the faculty, staff, administration, the auxiliary staff, Mike Bath and the police department working 12 hour shifts, etc. – saying they also did a tremendous job up and down the line. He thanked President Erickson and his team for what they've done to get the university ready.
- He said safety is the most important thing we have to make sure of as we approach the fall and the August 17 date – that is what we are going to concentrate on – how we can open safely for our students, faculty, administration, and staff.

ADJOURNMENT

Chair Mitchell adjourned the meeting at 9:30 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

/signed/ Cathy A. Andrew
Secretary of the Board of Trustees