

MINUTES
Board of Trustees Illinois State University
State Affairs Committee Meeting
January 25, 2024

Committee members present: Chair Scott Jenkins, Trustee Lia Merminga and Trustee Ash Ebikhumi

Other Trustees present: Kathy Bohn, Darren Tillis, Julie Jones, Bob Navarro

Staff present: Aondover Tarhule, Katy Killian, Brad Franke, Ani Yazedjian, Sandy Cavi, Jana Albrecht, Amy Hurd

Chair Scott Jenkins called the meeting to order at 1:20 p.m.

Chair Jenkins asked Trustee Merminga to call the roll. Trustees Merminga and Ebikhumi were present.

Chair Jenkins asked to move the legislative agenda and state legislative session information to Brad Franke's report on the agenda.

Chair Jenkins asked for a motion and second to approve the agenda. The motion to approve the agenda was made by Trustee Ebikhumi and seconded by Trustee Merminga. Vote in favor by all. The agenda was approved.

Trustee Jenkins called for public comments of which there were none.

Trustee Jenkins welcomed everyone and asked the committee members to introduce themselves. He stated that after Mr. Franke's report he would like to open the meeting for questions, observations and concerns.

Committee Update

Chair Scott Jenkins stated the nature of the committee is a two-way communication so that administration can talk to the trustees and the committee can talk to the public about what is happening on state, gubernatorial and legislative levels.

Illinois State University Legislative Update by Director of Public Affairs and Policy Brad Franke

Current job duties and assignments

Director of Public Affairs and Policy Brad Franke's report to the committee included an introduction. He began his current duties in August 2023 and has been working closely with Interim President Tarhule and Chief of Staff Katy Killian, plus faculty, staff and students to ensure ISU's legislative priorities are voiced to members of the Illinois General Assembly and leaders at the federal level.

Franke said his job duties include overseeing government and legislative affairs for the university and serving as an advisor to the Interim President, Trustees and university leadership on issues relating to local, state, and federal government. He tracks and analyzes new legislation and works to ensure our subject matter experts see and provide input on pertinent bills. He serves as a liaison to the general assembly or congress to ensure our concerns and recommendations are heard.

An important part of his role is promoting the university at the capitol and building positive working relationships with legislators, their staff members and state agency leadership on behalf of ISU. He also coordinates meetings with state and federal legislators so that ISU can convey successes, concerns, and current priorities.

Franke stated he works with other public universities in developing a higher education legislative agenda. He also coordinates with Killian, Interim President Tarhule and our events staff in organizing events and receptions. In October the first legislative reception since 2017 was held in Springfield and was attended by general assembly members, state legislative staff, and members of the Governor's office.

State and Federal Legislator Meetings

Upon direction from Interim President Tarhule, Franke stated he has been coordinating meetings with state and federal legislators on behalf of the university to discuss current successes, concerns, and priorities. To date, they have met with nearly 10 members of the General Assembly (some multiple times) with a focus on the Redbird Caucus. He stated he is working to host US Senators Durbin and Duckworth as well as the Governor. A new STEM building on campus is the top priority and Franke is working with Senator Koehler and Representative Chung to discuss working with the Capital Development Board (CDB) to locate funds from the last capital bill that was passed in 2019. He stated he is also working to schedule in-person meetings on behalf of Dr. Tarhule during session in Springfield to continue these conversations.

Grant Tracking and Applications

Franke stated that he is working with Congressman LaHood's office and receives weekly grant updates which he provides to Interim President Tarhule, Katy Killian and Craig McLauchlan, AVP for Research and Graduate Studies. This information is analyzed and distributed to the appropriate ISU personnel for input.

Franke stated that we also have an excellent relationship with Congressman Sorensen and his office.

Bill Reviews and Internal Meetings Regarding State Legislation

Franke discussed tracking state and federal legislation through Policy Engage software. If he finds a bill pertaining to Higher Education or ISU, he will contact the appropriate ISU staff and ask for input. If there are concerns about a bill or if we want to publicly support, he ensures we have a seat at the table.

Illinois State University/Public University Legislative Agenda

Franke stated ISU's top priority this spring is to obtain funding to begin work on a new STEM building on campus. This endeavor will require a capital request through the state through the CDB and Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity. Franke has been working with Senator Koehler and Representative Chung on this to obtain funding.

Franke stated he is also working with ISU leaders and members of the general assembly to address ISU's unfunded mandates. He has been informing legislators about our concerns. He has also been working with other public universities to formulate a higher education legislative agenda to benefit the personnel and students at ISU.

State Legislative Session Update

Franke stated the session began January 16th and runs through May 24th, subject to change, typically Tuesday through Friday. Sessions and committee hearings are very fluid; the Senate Higher Education Committee is scheduled to meet on Tuesdays at 5 p.m. and the House Higher Education Committee has not yet been scheduled.

During session, Franke stated, he is in and out of the capitol tracking bills, meeting with legislators and staff regarding our priorities, and attending/participating in Senate and House committee hearings. He said he will keep this team informed.

Other Discussion

Commission on Equitable Public University Funding

Interim President Tarhule discussed the higher ed funding formula and stated a proposal is being finalized and that Sandy Cavi, Associate Vice President for Budgeting and Planning, serves on the Technical Modeling Workgroup (subgroup). He is hopeful the new model will help ISU. Cavi discussed the complexities of the process and hopes we will see a small gain in funding. Trustee Tillis asked if equity issues drive the funding. Cavi discussed the committee's definition of "adequacy" which is the base funding requirement for student needs and that equity is built into defining expected resources to fund adequacy needs.

Proposed Student Mental Health Bill

Committee members asked for an update on the proposed Mental Health bill. Franke stated the bill has been assigned to the Higher Education Committee; ISU is behind the cause and supports the students on this proposed bill. However, logistically this will be difficult for schools to implement due to how to track absences, how to inform faculty about student absence, how to handle absences on an exam day, what if a student misses the bulk of a

class, etc. Franke stated a position paper on this has been drafted and lists concerns. The next steps are to talk to students, other schools, and work with Senator Koehler.

The committee raised concerns this could become another unfunded mandate and may cause instructors to take attendance differently, etc.

Visits to Campus

Franke stated State Comptroller Mendoza will visit campus in early March to meet with Dr. Tarhule, Cabinet and possibly visit a class. He is also working with Treasurer Frerichs on a similar visit. Lt. Governor Stratton mentioned she would like to visit and efforts are underway to invite the Governor to campus.

Interim President Tarhule mentioned the Governor and Deputy Governor Torres have indicated interest in attending a groundbreaking event for the College of Engineering. Trustee Merminga echoed that an event such as this would be an appropriate time for such a visit.

Priorities

Interim President Tarhule emphasized the STEM building and unfunded mandates were our priorities for this year. He stated the IBHE was clear that we should not ask for funding for the College of Engineering.

Trustee Bohn discussed how the STEM building would help students, including those who major in Engineering. Tarhule stated he would like to have some funding commitment for the STEM building before he comes before the Trustees with a request; however, he has been talking to Dr. Bohn about this topic. He also mentioned there may be some already approved funding for HVAC that could be applied to the STEM building. Navarro asked about a bill to support the STEM building. Franke stated this would be through the Capital Development Board. He is touching base with Senator Koehler's staff.

Tarhule discussed the amounts and causes of unfunded mandates on campus and conversation focused around state waivers for Special Education students, of which ISU leads the state. Chair Jenkins discussed information about special education and the great need for teachers. He referenced a publication on the topic that he will send to board members.

Trustee Jenkins encouraged Franke to let the Trustees know if there are instances when they can reach out to their contacts to help raise awareness on issues.

The Founding

Trustee Navarro asked if we can we invite Redbird Caucus members to Founders Day and the Bell Ringing. Franke stated he would check on the legislative calendar. Legislators could be nominated as bell ringers.

Lobbyists

Interim President Tarhule discussed having interviewed several federal lobbyists and would like to contract with a firm for a one-year period in order to pursue federal funding.

Content Test

Acting Provost Yazedjian mentioned the content test which students must pass before they can student teach. During COVID, students were allowed to student teach before taking this test which helped greatly and pass rates improved. She wonders if change could be made on this process.

Trustee Jones asked about test content and student pass rate. Yazedjian stated the Lauby Center would be able to give us specific percentages on this.

Adjournment

Chair Jenkins asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Motion was made by Trustee Ebikhumi and was seconded by Trustee Merminga. All voted in favor and the meeting adjourned at 2:35 p.m.