



**MINUTES OF THE TWO-HUNDRED-AND-TWENTY-SEVENTH  
MEETING OF THE UNIVERSITY CIVIL SERVICE MERIT BOARD –  
APRIL 22, 2025**

State Universities Civil Service System  
1717 Philo Road, Suite 24  
Urbana, IL

Northern Illinois University  
Altgeld Hall, Room 125  
DeKalb, IL

Chicago State University  
Gwendolyn Brooks Library  
Conference Room 352  
9501 South King Drive  
Chicago, IL

Southern Illinois University of Edwardsville  
School of Dental Medicine  
2800 College Ave.  
Alumni Conference Room, Room B273  
Alton, IL

Governors State University  
1 University Parkway  
Room C3322  
University Park, IL

University of Illinois at Chicago  
Discovery Partners Institute  
200 S Wacker Drive  
Conference Room 702  
Chicago, IL

Illinois State University  
718 W. College Avenue  
Room NSB 101A  
Normal, IL

*Also, via live stream at the following address: <https://multimedia.illinois.gov/sucss/sucss-live.html>*

**Call to Order and Roll Call – John Butler, Chair**

Chair Butler called the meeting to order at 1:05 p.m.

Members present at the State Universities Civil Service System (University System) office and posted designated sites were: John Butler, Chair, from the Northern Illinois University Board of Trustees; Barb Baurer from the Eastern Illinois University Board of Trustees; Carolyn Blackwell from the University of Illinois Board of Trustees; Tami Craig Schilling from the University of Illinois Board of Trustees; Scott Jenkins from the Illinois State University Board of Trustees; Jim Kvedaras from the Governors State University Board of Trustees; Kisha Lang from the Western Illinois University Board of Trustees; Jason Quiara from the Chicago State University Board of Trustees; and John Simmons from the Southern Illinois University Board of Trustees.

Members absent were Ramon Cepeda from the University of Illinois Board of Trustees and J. Todd Phillips from the Northeastern Illinois University Board of Trustees.

Gail Schiesser, Executive Director; Maggie Miller, Legal Counsel; and Teresa Rademacher, Secretary for the Merit Board, were also present. Various other university employees and University System staff were also in attendance.

**Consideration of participation by other Merit Board Members not physically present at the meeting site**

Chair Butler asked for approval for Tami Craig Schilling, who was not physically present due to being enroute to a posted location, to actively participate by other means per the Open Meetings Act requirements.

Mr. Kvedaras moved to allow Ms. Craig Schilling to participate via a nonpublic Webex location. Ms. Blackwell seconded Mr. Kvedaras's motion. In accordance with the Merit Board Bylaws and the Open Meetings Act, a roll call vote was taken, and the motion was approved with the following vote:

Mr. Kvedaras .....Aye  
Dr. Lang .....Aye  
Mr. Phillips .....Absent  
Mr. Quiara .....Aye  
Mr. Simmons .....Aye  
Ms. Baurer .....Aye  
Ms. Blackwell .....Aye  
Chair Butler .....Aye  
Mr. Cepeda .....Absent  
Ms. Craig Schilling .....Aye  
Mr. Jenkins .....Aye

**Approval of the Agenda for the 227<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Merit Board – John Butler, Chair**

Chair Butler asked for a motion to approve the agenda for the meeting. Mr. Simmons made a motion to approve the agenda for the 227<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Merit Board. Ms. Baurer seconded Mr. Simmons' motion. In accordance with the Merit Board Bylaws and the Open Meetings Act, a roll call vote was taken, and the motion was approved with the following vote:

Mr. Simmons .....Aye  
Ms. Baurer .....Aye  
Ms. Blackwell .....Aye  
Chair Butler .....Aye  
Mr. Cepeda .....Absent  
Ms. Craig Schilling .....Aye  
Mr. Jenkins .....Aye  
Mr. Kvedaras .....Aye

Dr. Lang .....Aye  
Mr. Phillips .....Absent  
Mr. Quiara .....Aye

### **Merit Board Reorganization**

Chair Butler stated that the Merit Board needed to elect officers for 2025. Chair Butler stated that according to Article 3, Section 1, of the Bylaws of the University Civil Service Merit Board (Bylaws), the Board is to elect a Chair and Vice Chair on an annual basis at the first meeting of the year. He also stated that, according to Article 8, Section 1, of the Bylaws, two members are to be elected to the Executive Committee, and per Article 5 of the Bylaws that the Merit Board appoint a Secretary for the Merit Board. He stated the current officers are himself as Chair and John Simmons as Vice Chair. The Executive Committee membership is Barb Baurer and one vacancy. The current Secretary for the Merit Board is Teresa Rademacher.

Chair Butler then called for nominations for the position of Chair. Mr. Simmons made a motion to nominate John Butler. Ms. Baurer seconded Mr. Simmons' motion.

There being no other nominations, Chair Butler called for nominations for Vice Chair. Chair Butler made a motion to nominate Mr. Simmons. Ms. Craig Schilling seconded Chair Butler's motion.

There being no other nominations for Vice Chair, Chair Butler called for nominations for the Executive Committee. Chair Butler made a motion to nominate Ms. Baurer for one of the positions. Mr. Simmons seconded Chair Butler's motion. There being no other nominations, Chair Butler called for nominations for the second position on the Executive Committee. Chair Butler made a motion to nominate Mr. Kvedaras. Mr. Simmons seconded Chair Butler's motion.

Chair Butler asked for a motion to close the nominations. Mr. Kvedaras made a motion to close the nominations. Dr. Lang seconded Mr. Kvedaras' motion. In accordance with the Merit Board Bylaws and the Open Meetings Act, a roll call vote was taken, and the motion was approved with the following vote:

Mr. Kvedaras .....Aye  
Dr. Lang .....Aye  
Mr. Phillips .....Absent  
Mr. Quiara .....Aye  
Mr. Simmons .....Aye  
Ms. Baurer .....Aye  
Ms. Blackwell .....Aye  
Chair Butler .....Aye  
Mr. Cepeda .....Absent  
Ms. Craig Schilling .....Aye  
Mr. Jenkins .....Aye

Chair Butler asked for a roll call for the single nominee of Dr. Butler for the position of Chair. In accordance with the Merit Board Bylaws and the Open Meetings Act, a roll call vote was taken, and the motion was approved with the following vote:

Ms. Baurer.....Aye  
Ms. Blackwell .....No  
Chair Butler .....Aye  
Mr. Cepeda.....Absent  
Ms. Craig Schilling .....Aye  
Mr. Jenkins .....Aye  
Mr. Kvedaras .....Aye  
Dr. Lang .....Aye  
Mr. Phillips .....Absent  
Mr. Quiara.....Aye  
Mr. Simmons.....Aye

Chair Butler asked for a roll call for the single nominee of Mr. Simmons for the position of Vice Chair. In accordance with the Merit Board Bylaws and the Open Meetings Act, a roll call vote was taken, and the motion was approved with the following vote:

Ms. Baurer.....Aye  
Ms. Blackwell .....Aye  
Chair Butler .....Aye  
Mr. Cepeda.....Absent  
Ms. Craig Schilling .....Aye  
Mr. Jenkins .....Aye  
Mr. Kvedaras .....Aye  
Dr. Lang .....Aye  
Mr. Phillips .....Absent  
Mr. Quiara.....Aye  
Mr. Simmons.....Aye

Chair Butler asked for a roll call for the nomination of Ms. Baurer as a member of the Executive Committee. In accordance with the Merit Board Bylaws and the Open Meetings Act, a roll call vote was taken, and the motion was approved with the following vote:

Ms. Baurer.....Aye  
Ms. Blackwell .....Aye  
Chair Butler .....Aye  
Mr. Cepeda.....Absent  
Ms. Craig Schilling .....Aye  
Mr. Jenkins .....Aye  
Mr. Kvedaras .....Aye  
Dr. Lang .....Aye

Mr. Phillips .....Absent  
Mr. Quiara .....Aye  
Mr. Simmons .....Aye

Chair Butler asked for a roll call for the nomination of Mr. Kvedaras as a member of the Executive Committee. In accordance with the Merit Board Bylaws and the Open Meetings Act, a roll call vote was taken, and the motion was approved with the following vote:

Ms. Baurer .....Aye  
Ms. Blackwell .....Aye  
Chair Butler .....Aye  
Mr. Cepeda .....Absent  
Ms. Craig Schilling .....Aye  
Mr. Jenkins .....Aye  
Mr. Kvedaras .....Aye  
Dr. Lang .....Aye  
Mr. Phillips .....Absent  
Mr. Quiara .....Aye  
Mr. Simmons .....Aye

Chair Butler asked for a motion to appoint Ms. Rademacher as the Secretary for the Merit Board. Mr. Kvedaras made a motion to appoint Ms. Rademacher as the Board's Secretary. Dr. Lang seconded Mr. Kvedaras' motion. In accordance with the Merit Board Bylaws and the Open Meetings Act, a roll call vote was taken, and the motion was approved with the following vote:

Mr. Kvedaras .....Aye  
Dr. Lang .....Aye  
Mr. Phillips .....Absent  
Mr. Quiara .....Aye  
Mr. Simmons .....Aye  
Ms. Baurer .....Aye  
Ms. Blackwell .....Aye  
Chair Butler .....Aye  
Mr. Cepeda .....Absent  
Ms. Craig Schilling .....Aye  
Mr. Jenkins .....Aye

**Consideration of the Minutes of the 226<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Merit Board, October 15, 2024**

Ms. Blackwell made a motion to approve the Minutes of the 226<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the University Civil Service Merit Board. Ms. Baurer seconded Ms. Blackwell's motion. In accordance with the Merit Board Bylaws and the Open Meetings Act, a roll call vote was taken, and the motion was approved with the following vote:

Ms. Blackwell .....Aye  
 Chair Butler .....Aye  
 Mr. Cepeda.....Absent  
 Ms. Craig Schilling .....Aye  
 Mr. Jenkins .....Aye  
 Mr. Kvedaras .....Aye  
 Dr. Lang .....Aye  
 Mr. Phillips .....Absent  
 Mr. Quiara .....Aye  
 Mr. Simmons.....Aye  
 Ms. Baurer.....Aye

**Consideration of the Closed Minutes of the 226<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Merit Board, October 15, 2024**

Chair Butler requested not to take any action on this agenda item.

**Public Comments**

Executive Director Schiesser stated the University System had received four requests for public comments: James Quisenberry, Executive Director of Student Affairs Technology at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign; Matthew Ballinger, Police Chief at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign; Ross Owens, Police Chief at the University of Illinois Springfield; and Aaron Woodruff, Police Chief at Illinois State University.

**Mr. James Quisenberry, Executive Director of Student Affairs Technology at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign**

Mr. Quisenberry stated he had served as an appointed member of local and state boards as an elected official in municipal government and that he appreciated the time and effort the Merit Board contributed by serving on the Board. He said he would focus his remarks on two issues that significantly affect the hiring of technology staff. The two issues being the narrowing of qualified applicants for pools for entry-level roles and the constraint of only being able to hire Illinois residents in a national and increasingly remote technology labor market.

Regarding applicant pools for entry-level technology positions, he shared his experience with the rule as applied to the IT Technical Associate and the IT Support Associate classifications. He stated that in their searches, they often begin with a promising list of candidates, but after test scores are processed, they see qualified applicants drop simply because they fall into a lower band due to a single qualified score of 100. There are applicants with scores of 70s, 80s, and 90s. But if there's a score of 100, the 70s are all dropped off the list. In eastern Illinois the pool of qualified technology professionals is already limited, and this practice further undermines the ability to hire strong candidates. He further stated that more importantly, it restricts the ability to bring diverse voices and perspectives into their teams, something they view as a key part of their

commitment to inclusive excellence. A scoring system that unintentionally narrows the pool and creates an artificial barrier to entry-level roles is something they hope the Board would revisit.

Second, he spoke about the requirement that new hires must establish residency in Illinois. During and after COVID, the technology workforce has trended towards hybrid and fully remote work. He stated the competitors for these hires, public and private institutions alike, have adapted. If they are recruiting for a software developer as an example, and a candidate in another state is a good match, they can't move forward unless they are willing to relocate to Illinois. In practice, what happens is this, a candidate goes through the entire search process, interviews, references are contacted, finalist selection is made and then they decline the offer when relocation becomes a sticking point. Sometimes, applicants have been upfront about it, but sometimes, they don't learn that until the point of making the offer. Either way, it means starting the process all over again, which wastes time, loses momentum, and damages the credibility as an employer. He stated that he recognizes these rules were created for a different time and may have been well-suited to an era before remote work, but technology roles today don't always require physical presence, and our civil service policies need the flexibility to acknowledge that.

He thanked the Merit Board for the opportunity to raise these issues and to speak on behalf of others in higher education who face similar hiring challenges and hoped the Board would continue to look for ways to modernize the hiring frameworks while maintaining fairness and integrity in the civil service system.

Mr. Kvedaras asked for some order of magnitude regarding this issue such as the numbers he was talking about. Mr. Quisenberry stated he could only speak to the Student Affairs technology department and that they have a 50-person team and they hire three to five people a year. He further stated that when they are hiring software developers or management-type positions, they regularly lose candidates in the current process.

Matt Ballinger, Chief of Police at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

Chief Ballinger thanked the Merit Board for the opportunity to speak. He stated that the Chiefs from the state universities have come together in response to a proposed set of rule changes on the agenda that are up for a vote. These proposed changes were not communicated to the various HR Directors without prior collaboration or consultation. To gain clarity and express their concerns, they request a delay in voting to allow time for a meaningful dialogue and the inclusion of the various HR Directors in this discussion. Unfortunately, those requests were not accommodated, but the Executive Director did offer a meeting on April 21. The meeting lasted well over an hour and only raised more questions and concerns. He again asked the Merit Board to delay the vote. Most concerning is the removal of input from the HR Directors, placing decision-making authority solely in the hands of the Executive Director of the University System without consultation from subject matter experts. He further stated that law enforcement agencies, particularly at the university level, continue to face significant challenges in recruiting qualified candidates.

Currently, universities are unable to extend offers before surrounding agencies do, simply because they receive more applicants more quickly. He further stated that more than 250 classifications were transitioned to credential-based testing without input or explanation and with the Police Officer and Telecommunicator classifications to be the only ones for which require in-person testing.

He further stated that the chiefs were surprised to learn that an RFP had been submitted from vendors to administer the written test. This pointed out IOS, current vendor, as the presumed standard, evaluated by a committee that they were not involved in. The proposed solution involves handwritten tests personally administered by the University System at various locations and at times throughout the year. This approach requires candidates to travel more and, in their view, does not align with the current industry's best practices. We have asked to see the research into these best practices and believe there will be a negative financial impact in conducting the testing on this matter.

Dr. Lang asked if they wanted to eliminate one of the positions that they currently have now. Chief Ballinger responded no, this is about the testing and hiring practice and how they get to those testing practices and how the test is designed and implemented. He further explained that currently, the testing comes through the civil service system. The tests are non-credential-based examinations.

Dr. Lang asked if this was because of the lack of consideration for the credentials assessment. Chief Ballinger responded that they were surprised when they learned about these changes. It's not just the credential-based assessments, it also has to do with the elimination of the Police Corporal classification. The Police Corporal is very instrumental in some places and so eliminating that classification was not part of the whole process. He also stated that there is a wide variety of things inside this proposal that really aren't addressed.

Dr. Lang asked if the University System was also asking to eliminate the Police Corporal classification as well. Chief Ballinger responded, yes, but freeze may be a better term.

Ms. Miller, University System Legal Counsel, commented that ensuring timely and competitive hiring practices is important; however, the Act does explicitly state that the purpose of the University System is to establish a sound program of personnel administration for each place of employment. The Act specifies that a central tenant of this sound program of personnel administration isn't the timely and competitive hiring practice. The requirement that all certificates, appointments, and promotions to positions in these agencies and institutions shall be made solely on the basis of merit and fitness to be ascertained by examination. The rest of the Act, all of the rules; everything has to meet the basis of merit and fitness to be ascertained by examination. With regard to the question of potentially freezing the registers for Police Corporals, the University System indicated that they would be willing to revisit the discussion of the Police Corporal classification.

Ross Owens, Chief of Police for the University of Illinois Springfield

Chief Owens talked about the deep concerns and shared commitment to a merit system that is both fair and collaborative. When the Executive Director began implementing significant revisions to police testing, eliminating the officer oral board, centralizing written exams under the civil service system's sole control, scheduling regionally without stakeholder input, and discontinuing the Police Corporal classification, neither the HR Directors nor the Police Chiefs had been consulted.

He further stated that he respects the University System's need for consistency and legal compliance, yet authority without collaboration risks unintended barriers to recruitment, especially at smaller campuses where applicant pools are already narrow and strains universities budgets. Removing the Police Corporal is a crucial step in mentoring and leadership development for new officers.

He asked the Merit Board to direct the agency to take the following steps before any further changes are finalized.

- 1) Establish a joint advisory committee, create a standing committee of HR Directors and Police Chiefs to review proposed examination revisions, vendor selections, and cost-sharing methods;
- 2) Ensure transparency in vendor selection; circulate all RFP proposals, scoring rubrics, and projected budgets to stakeholders;
- 3) Maintain the Police Corporal classification;
- 4) Embed local subject matter experts and amend the University System procedures so that HR Directors and Police Chiefs serve alongside external subject matter experts in test development panels as envisioned; and
- 5) Map and optimize testing locations; use applicant data maps provided by local HR units to select regional test sites that minimize travel burdens and maximize accessibility, balancing efficiency with equity of opportunity.

He concluded that their immediate call to action is that the board vote "no" on the proposal and promote the pathway for a collaborative approach to the future of our State Universities Police and Public Safety Departments.

Dr. Lang asked when this process started, what was the process. Did they have other representatives there? Did they have the university Police Chiefs there? Who was included in this process? Chief Woodruff stated that from their perspective, they were told that there were subject matter experts there, but it was none of the chiefs. Whenever the Police Chiefs have their meetings to discuss this, no one was even aware this was being discussed until last week.

Dr. Lang asked about the JCAR rules, if there was a change without any consultation. Executive Director Schiesser responded that there's a difference between what Chief Owens described as having happened several years ago and what is happening at this time. What happened several years ago when the Police Chiefs were involved as subject matter experts, an examination was developed specifically for the University System. What the agency is doing now is to purchase an

examination that's already been prepared, tested, and evaluated for reliability and validity by an outside vendor. So, the input of subject matter experts and the examination that the agency is seeking to purchase has already been completed.

Dr. Lang stated that everyone should buy in for this process. Executive Director Schiesser responded that there have always been examinations for these classifications. The Merit Board and the University System long ago determined that the security and safety concerns of campus and police require a more specific kind of examination than what a credential assessment is going to provide. She further stated it was determined some years ago when the agency moved largely to credential assessments, police examinations, would be prepared by agencies whose expertise is in police examinations. The University System is asking the Merit Board to consider a much narrower thing than either of the chiefs suggest. We're asking for the ability to change our rules to address different testing concerns for the police classifications, police officer, police corporal, if it stays in place. We are just now beginning the request for quotes. We're asking for the JCAR process to begin.

Dr. Lang asked if this item could be tabled to give everyone an opportunity to catch up with what's going on and what they're going to be responsible for. Executive Director Schiesser responded we are asking the Merit Board to permit us to present the proposed rules to JCAR, but that we would not take this particular set of rules to JCAR until there were additional opportunities to meet and talk to the Police Chiefs.

Aaron Woodriff, Chief of Police at Illinois State University, stated he had dedicated over 27 years to law enforcement, 22 of which have been with Illinois State University, with 14 years as the Chief. He stated that throughout the years, the State University police chiefs have maintained a strong, collaborative relationship with the University System. Alongside HR Directors, the Chiefs are the only group that is regularly engaged with the systems office to address the distinct challenges surrounding police classifications and testing processes. He stated that while they have not always seen eye-to-eye on every issue, historically, our partnership has been built on mutual respect, open dialogue, and a commitment to finding solutions.

However, the Chiefs were shocked to learn, without prior communication, that during an HR Director's meeting on April 11, Executive Director Schiesser unveiled major changes to the police testing and classification process. These changes have significant consequences for our departments, our operations, our budgets, and, most critically, our ability to recruit and hire police officers and telecommunicators. Over the past few years, the chiefs have requested ways to streamline the hiring process, including advocating for the elimination of the oral boards.

He stated that Executive Director Schiesser had previously indicated that the oral boards could not be eliminated without a complete revision of the testing process. While this rationale is understandable, it is disappointing that we were not informed when this revision process recently began after years of inquiry into this matter. In fact, that RFP was posted on February 27, and the Chiefs were never notified of it until yesterday. He stated had they been aware, they could have contributed additional feedback and recommendations to improve this process as

subject matter experts. Prior to 2020, police officer testing would consistently yield more than 100 applicants, resulting in hiring lists with over 30 candidates. Today, we are fortunate if we end up with a final list of 3 applicants. Our most recent testing cycle produced zero qualified applicants at ISU. He stated that this challenge is not unique to ISU. Policing is grappling with fewer applicants and fierce competition among agencies to secure both new recruits and experienced officers.

When the last major police testing revisions took place over 15 years ago, he, along with other chiefs, worked closely with the System Office and the vendor at that time, IO Solutions, to ensure the questions and testing framework aligned with the realities of campus law enforcement. This time, however, we were excluded entirely. We were not consulted on the RFP criteria or even included as evaluators for the submitted proposals. Despite our efforts to collaborate with the systems office on these pressing issues, new challenges continue to emerge, some of which you may be voting on today. In the same meeting, Executive Director Schiesser revealed the System Office plans to take over the administration of the written knowledge exam currently managed by the local HR departments. Presently, the knowledge exam is computer-based, scored electronically, and automatically uploaded to the systems office, with local HR staff acting as test proctors. The proposed changes would revert the test to a pen-and-paper format administered solely by the University System at regional testing sites of their choosing. This transition will likely require some applicants, including those applying for lower-paying telecommunicator positions, to travel across the state, unnecessarily complicating the hiring practice and leading to further applicant attrition. In addition to the proposed testing changes, Executive Director Schiesser announced her intention to eliminate the Police Corporal classification. He further urged the Board to speak with their chiefs and HR Directors about the impact of these proposed changes and to postpone the vote.

Dr. Butler asked Chief Woodruff if he had an objection to the definition of "Subject Matter Expert" that was added in Section 250.5 of the Code. Chief Woodruff stated he couldn't speak to what the intent behind adding the definition.

Ms. Miller stated the proposed definition for "Subject Matter Expert" was to provide a definition of a person who possesses an understanding of the duties of, and knowledge, skills, and abilities required for competent performance of the tasks on which they have been selected to comment as demonstrated by relevant professional life, formal education, or work experience comparable to formal education. She further stated that in drafting that definition, it was modeled after the definition in the Federal Code located at 5 U.S.C.S. 3304 regarding the examination of government employees.

She further stated that there had been some conversation around the logistics and concern that candidates might have to travel far to take their testing, but the logistics aren't the issue on the table right now. The item on the agenda is whether the Merit Board should approve the proposed language to JCAR. There has also been discussion of the process that was used in 2016-2017. At that time, the University System was able to develop examinations with subject matter experts in collaboration with the chiefs from the universities and create an examination that, with

adequate reliability and validity, was tailored to our University System's needs for policing. The quotes that have been received to mimic that process are around \$500,000 per examination, and they are very cost prohibitive. Comparatively, the quotes for complete examinations that were developed and used in different municipalities, not just specific to our system, were much more cost-effective.

### **Report of the Designated Employer Representative Group – Jami Painter, DER for the University of Illinois System**

Jami Painter, Senior Associate Vice President and Chief Human Resources Officer for the University of Illinois System, presented comments for the Designated Employer Representative Group. She stated that in preparing her remarks, she revisited past remarks to the Merit Board to reflect on the art of our collective efforts toward modernizing the statute, rules, and regulations of the civil service system. She shared a comment from her predecessor from the May 20, 2009, Merit Board meeting, which stated, over the past several years, HR Directors have identified a number of initiatives that they felt would assist not only the universities but also the University System and civil service members in how employment policies and protocols are administered. Two of the challenges she cited were the rule of three and the lack of a defined employment category for those on soft funding remain unresolved 16 years later.

Despite being clear priorities, there has been no substantial progress. Fast forward to May 2015, when a subcommittee was appointed to review five modernization recommendations from HR Directors. The subcommittee held open meetings, gathering input from various stakeholders, and, again, issues like the residency requirement and the rule of three topped the list. Now, in 2025, we find ourselves in nearly the same place. Despite two decades of earnest effort to improve and strengthen the recruitment and employment framework and enhance our competitiveness in attracting top-tier talent.

Ms. Painter stated that they have been working on this since the George W. Bush administration. Higher Education is frequently labeled as resistant to change, and our collective inability to modernize this system reinforces that perception, while making our institutions less attractive workplaces and eroding our appeal as employers. She stated that the Merit Board had heard many of the issues before, from every HR leader who has provided the HRDAC report, as well as other stakeholders, such as what you heard in public comment today. She stated that they feel defeated, exhausted, and unheard, but they will not give up.

The group remains committed to improving and streamlining the processes to close the widening gap with our peers, enhance our competitiveness, and align more closely with candidate expectations. She said they believe in the mission of our universities and believe in the faculty and staff. They believe in the transformative power of education and research and in the responsibility, they have to build a system that serves today's workforce, not one designed for a very different world in 1952. HR professionals across the many institutions are on the front lines. They hear daily concerns about hiring delays, outdated processes, inflexible categories, and shrinking applicant pools. Resilience isn't just part of their job; it's their survival skill.

She said they also hear frustration from talented candidates who are screened out by rules that no longer make sense and, given technological advancements, are not willing to wait long periods of time before they hear back from them. We want to leave our institutions better than they found them but need the help of the Merit Board. The group asks that the Merit Board give a clear directive to the University System to deliver real, actionable changes within a defined and reasonable time frame

She further stated do we really want to jeopardize that momentum with outdated hiring restrictions rooted in a different era, an era when Dwight D. Eisenhower was president? The current staff are outstanding and deeply committed; however, even they would argue and agree that navigating the constraints of civil service rules is one of the most challenging and frustrating aspects of their work. Our workforce deserves a system that reflects the modern realities of hiring, mobility, and innovation. The group is ready and eager to help shape that system

She concluded by stating that on behalf of the state HR Director's Advisory Committee, she urgently and respectfully asked the Merit Board to help break this cycle. The challenges they face require bold, swift, and decisive action. The groundwork had been laid and it's time to shift to focused, accelerated action. The group invites the Merit Board to meet with them and to listen to the decades of experience they bring, and to help them become true partners in meaningful, lasting change. She thanked the Merit Board.

Executive Director Schiesser commented on the residency requirement stating that Ms. Painter was aware that the residency requirement is set by the legislature and not by this office. The University System saw nothing that the University of Illinois provided for legislative change in this area, in the past legislative session. She further stated she didn't know what's going to happen, but legislative change is outside this office's ability to make happen. Second, as regards the Rule of Three, as Ms. Painter also knows, about a year ago, the Employee Advisory Committee asked for data regarding the Rule of Three. The University System received the data, and the agency helped the Employee Advisory Committee analyze the data. It did not prove that the Rule of Three was ineffective or impractical. In fact, it provided exactly the opposite. The data that the University of Illinois specifically provided showed us that if they had actually followed the Rule of Three, they would have had more than ample candidates for the positions. The University System is perfectly willing to talk to the HR Group about these things, but the data that the group provided doesn't show a need for immediate change.

Dr. Lang asked how employees can advance within the system, how it worked, and what the process was. Executive Director Schiesser stated that there are a couple of available processes for promotion and that she had done this recently with her own staff. It was determined that the work that the employee was doing merited a promotion. We offered that individual an examination and the employee passed the examination, and we promoted them. Another methodology that's commonly used on campuses is a position audit, where an individual is given duties that add to their abilities and added to the position, creating tasks that are often from the next higher class in the promotional line. Once those tasks reach a predominance, that individual

is available for promotion through the reclassification process. There are a couple of different ways that it's possible, but promotion is mostly done on the campus under their own policies and procedures.

Dr. Lang asked if HR takes too long to assess or the timeline for assessment is. Ms. Painter commented the entire process takes a long time because of the testing rubrics because of the residency requirement. HR does have to assess and do the testing, that is correct. Still, there are also a lot of other factors around the entire process that make it very antiquated and very difficult for them to do it in a very efficient manner.

### **Report of the State Universities Employee Advisory Committee – Jill Odom, Chair**

Ms. Odom, Chair of the Employees Advisory Committee, introduced Andy Harpst, Tool Room Supervisor from the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, and stated that he had been a member of the committee for 5 ½ years and currently serves as Parliamentarian for the Election Committee and Chair. She also introduced Aaron Ketchum. Mr. Ketchum is a Heat Frost Insulator at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign and has been a member of the committee for a 1 ½ years.

She stated that since the last meeting of the Merit Board, the committee met three times; October 23 and 24, 2024 at the University of Illinois Chicago, January 22 and 23, 2025, at the University System, and April 15 and 16, 2025, at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

She stated that the agendas consisted of regular committee business, such as approval of previous minutes, reports from our Executive, Legislative, and Election Committee Chairs, reports from the University System Executive Director, and robust discussions surrounding concerns and processes related to civil service constituents. At the October meeting, in addition to our regular agenda, Noel Rowe from the University System provided targeted training for the committee, which led to robust discussions surrounding the Act, rules, and procedures. These sessions are extremely beneficial to the newest members, as well as a refresher for more seasoned members. The committee is always appreciative of the opportunity to work with and learn from the University System. Their knowledge, interest, and collaborative discussions with EAC provide the committee with the necessary information and tools to further their goal of providing the best possible information and opinion to the Merit Board on matters related to civil service employees. During the October meeting, Dr. John Butler joined the group. Dr. Butler introduced himself and gave the group a brief biography of his time and experience with higher education. He expressed interest in hearing about issues that the committee is experiencing regarding our respective campuses. Some of the items shared and discussed were related to open and continuous testing, classification registers, the residency requirement, and the rule of three. Ms. Odom stated that the discussions with Dr. Butler were very informative, and they looked forward to future visits with other Merit Board members at their meetings.

She said that the January meeting was their annual meeting where they elected officers for the year, as well as their standing Executive, Legislative, and Election committees, and she was again elected the chair. Jacqueline Pointer was elected Vice Chair, and Tanea Harris was elected Secretary. At that meeting the committee also dove deeper into their position related to the residency requirement, the rule of three, and open and continuous testing.

On February 6, 2025, HB 3062 was filed with the clerk (Illinois House) and EAC met to discuss the impact of this legislation on our civil service constituents. On March 12 the bill went before the Higher Education Committee, and several members of EAC submitted witness slips related to the bill. Since then, an amendment was filed, the bill passed out of the House, and as of this meeting currently resides in the Senate. Though EAC is supportive of portions of the amendment, the committee does have some concerns related to the administration of the change. The committee will continue to monitor HB 3062 as it moves through the Senate.

At the committee's April meeting, the committee had a very robust discussion surrounding their priorities and goals for the committee. There are many topics of concern to our constituents, which all deserve our attention. However, to make the best use of their time, the committee focused on the following four topics: 1) open and continuous testing, 2) extra help employees, 3) salary and compensation, and 4) register maintenance.

Mr. Harps stated that some universities do offer biannual or quarterly testing or credential assessments of the most common classifications, such as those within the skilled trades. However, even with biannual or quarterly testing, there are still significant delays in the hiring process, as applicants are required to monitor job boards and apply for positions that they have already tested, for or been assessed, and classifications they have already expressed interest in. It has been explained to us that registers are created when a position is posted, and applicants submit their resumes and materials for assessment. Once the position has been filled, that register is removed, and applicants interested in a position in the same classification with the same MAQs (minimum acceptable qualifications) must resubmit their application and materials for each position. This process was implemented with the change from knowledge tests to credential assessments, and as much as progress can lead to improved processes, sometimes the new process only hampers things.

The committee feels that allowing for truly open and continuous testing would ease the application process for current and future employees. It would provide improved promotional opportunities for current employees who are interested in both lateral and upward mobility within the organization. It would increase the speed of the hiring process as units would have a register of qualified applicants already assessed and ready for referrals.

During a time of reduced resources, where many of our employees are being asked to take on additional duties of vacated positions, spreading the work of three, four, or five employees over one, two, or three, supervisors or managers demanding that the work be done without a reduction to output or services, speeding up the hiring processes would improve efficiencies at the unit level and provide the support that current employees need to complete tasks efficiently

and accurately. A current and active register would allow a unit to request applicants with the top three scores, begin the interview process, and move to hiring much quicker. As the posting and assessment period can take anywhere from two to six weeks or even longer, the committee feels that a truly open and continuous testing process would significantly speed up the entire hiring process.

During the committee's April meeting, Executive Director Schiesser assisted EAC with providing valuable information and clarification of the civil service rules and procedures which are based on the statute and rules. The committee looks forward to continuing these discussions at the next meeting scheduled for July 22 and 23, 2025.

**Consideration of Discharge Proceedings Number EIU-24-1 filed against John Janosik by Eastern Illinois University**

Chair Butler asked Ms. Miller to give an overview of the above discharge case. Ms. Miller stated that Eastern Illinois University (EIU) filed Written Charges for Discharge against John Janosik on October 9, 2024. Mr. Janosik timely submitted a request for a hearing on October 22, 2024, and later waived his right to have a hearing within the 45-day requirement. The hearing took place on December 3, 2024, under the purview of Hearing Officer Lorna Geiler. Mr. Janosik began his employment at EIU in 2012 as a Level II Programmer and was promoted to a Level III Programmer in 2016 or 2017. As a Level III Programmer, Mr. Janosik was expected to work independently, with very little, if any, assistance from his supervisors. However, he often struggled to perform his work timely and without substantial assistance. EIU filed two charges. First, continued inability to perform assigned duties, and second, excessive absences. Three supervisory members of Mr. Janosik's department testified on behalf of the EIU. They spoke about his performance, about their role in the EIU's efforts to help Mr. Janosik improve, and their role in the progressive discipline that took place when Mr. Janosik did not improve. EIU also noted that Mr. Janosik utilized more paid time off than usual once his supervisor began closely monitoring his performance and instituting progressive discipline.

Mr. Kvedaras made a motion that the Merit Board go into Closed Session to discuss the above discharge case. Mr. Simmons seconded Mr. Kvedaras' motion. In accordance with the Merit Board Bylaws and Open Meetings Act, a roll call vote was taken, and the motion was approved with the following vote:

Mr. Kvedaras.....Aye  
Dr. Lang.....Aye  
Mr. Phillips.....Absent  
Mr. Quiara.....Aye  
Mr. Simmons.....Aye  
Ms. Baurer.....Aye  
Ms. Blackwell.....Aye  
Chair Butler.....Aye  
Mr. Cepeda.....Absent

Ms. Craig Schilling .....Aye  
Mr. Jenkins .....Aye

The Merit Board went into a Closed Session at 2:34 p.m.

The Merit Board returned to Open Session at 2:50 p.m.

Chair Butler stated that the Merit Board needed to adopt a Decision and Order regarding this case.

Mr. Simmons made a motion to discharge John Janosik. Ms. Blackwell seconded Mr. Simmons' motion. In accordance with the Merit Board Bylaws and Open Meetings Act, a roll call vote was taken, and the motion was approved with the following vote:

Mr. Simmons .....Aye  
Ms. Baurer .....Aye  
Ms. Blackwell .....Aye  
Chair Butler .....Aye  
Mr. Cepeda .....Absent  
Ms. Craig Schilling .....Aye  
Mr. Jenkins .....Aye  
Mr. Kvedaras .....Aye  
Dr. Lang .....Aye  
Mr. Phillips .....Absent  
Mr. Quiara .....Aye

Therefore, the following Decision and Order of the University Civil Service Merit Board was adopted.



**STATE OF ILLINOIS  
STATE UNIVERSITIES CIVIL SERVICE SYSTEM**

EASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY, Employer, v. JOHN JANOSIK, Employee.	BEFORE THE UNIVERSITY CIVIL SERVICE MERIT BOARD  DISCHARGE PROCEEDING No. EIU-24-1
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**DECISION AND ORDER OF THE UNIVERSITY CIVIL SERVICE MERIT BOARD**

### **PROCEDURAL HISTORY**

Discharge proceedings have been commenced by **EASTERN LLINOIS UNIVERSITY**, employer, against **JOHN JANOSIK**, employee, by service of Written Charges for Discharge by personal service, on October 9, 2024, and the employee, **JOHN JANOSIK**, has filed a timely written request for Hearing. A Hearing was duly convened, held, and concluded on December 3, 2024, in conformity with the procedures set forth in Section 250.110(f) of the Illinois Administrative Code (Code) (80 Ill. Adm. Code §250.110(f)). The complete Hearing Record has been certified and placed on file in this cause.

### **FINDINGS**

The University Civil Service Merit Board has examined and reviewed the Hearing Record, as supplemented, which includes the following:

1. Written Charges for Discharge, dated October 9, 2024
2. Suspension Notice Pending Discharge, dated October 9, 2024
3. Employee's Request for Hearing, received on October 22, 2024
4. Acknowledgment of Hearing Request, dated October 22, 2024
5. Notice of Appointment as Hearing Officer and Notice of Convening of Hearing to Hearing Officer, dated October 31, 2024
6. Notice of Convening of Hearing to the parties of record, dated October 31, 2024
7. Order Regarding Procedures for Remote Hearing, dated November 12, 2024
8. Employee's Request for Subpoena received November 15, 2024
9. Subpoena, Eastern Illinois University, dated November 15, 2024
10. Employer's Witness List received November 15, 2024
11. Employer's Response to Subpoena received November 18, 2024
12. Employee's Waiver of Rights to Hearing within 45 Days, dated November 18, 2024
13. Order Regarding Employee's Motion to Continue Hearing, dated November 19, 2024
14. Hearing Officer's Order on Request for Subpoena, dated November 21, 2024
15. Amended Notice of Convening of Hearing to Hearing Officer, dated November 21, 2024
16. Amended Notice of Convening of Hearing to the parties of record, dated November 21, 2024
17. Transcript, December 3, 2024, Hearing
18. Exhibits admitted into Record at Hearing, December 3, 2024
19. Request for Findings of Fact from Hearing Officer, dated January 2, 2025

20. Findings of Fact rendered by Hearing Officer, dated January 8, 2025

Now being fully advised of the matters contained in the Hearing Record, as supplemented, and based solely on the matters contained in the Hearing Record, as supplemented, the University Civil Service Merit Board makes the following jurisdictional and factual findings and issues the following Decision and Order:

**DECISION AND ORDER**

**WHEREFORE, IT IS HEREBY ORDERED:**

1. The Findings of Fact of the Hearing Officer, attached hereto, are approved and certified to the employer, **EASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY**, to the extent not inconsistent with the findings made herein.
2. The employee, **JOHN JANOSIK**, is hereby separated from the service of his employer, **EASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY**, and the effective date of his discharge shall be April 22, 2025.
3. This Order is FINAL and is subject to the Administrative Review Law. Section 250 of Title 80 of the Illinois Administrative Code does not authorize the Merit Board to hear any motion or request for reconsideration.
4. The names of the Hearing Officer and each of the parties is as follows:

**Hearing Officer**

Ms. Lorna Geiler  
Attorney at Law

**Parties of Record**

Mr. Austin Hill  
Attorney at Law

Mr. John Janosik

**DATED AND ENTERED** this 23<sup>rd</sup> day of April 2025.

**UNIVERSITY CIVIL SERVICE MERIT BOARD**

By: /s/John Butler

John Butler, Chair  
University Civil Service Merit Board

ATTEST:

/s/ Teresa Rademacher

Teresa Rademacher  
Secretary for the Merit Board

**Consideration of proposed rulemaking to Sections 250.5, 250.50, 250.60, and 250.140 of the Illinois Administrative Code (Code) (80 Ill. Adm. Code §250.5, §250.50, §250.60, and §250.140)**

Executive Director Schiesser stated the University System was proposing rule modifications related to police testing allowing the University System to purchase examinations from subject matter experts for three classifications: Police Officer, Police Sergeant, and Police Telecommunicator. The proposed rules would also enable the University System to administer those examinations and maintain those registers for all places of employment. Enacting rules permitting the purchase of examinations from subject matter experts for these specific classifications is a change that is consistent with a decision the agency made more than a decade ago to turn to subject matter experts as a way to promote safety and security on campuses and to ensure that we identify the most qualified candidates on the basis of merit and fitness.

The proposed changes to facilitate this shift would impact Sections 250.5 where "Subject Matter Expert" was defined. Sections 250.50 and 250.60, where the University System would codify their ability to conduct examinations and clarify how the University System and employers would work together to facilitate a more active role in the examination and register maintenance for these classifications. She further stated that the proposed rules would permit the closure of examinations for longer than six months when appropriate and to allow the University System to modify examinations that are creating a barrier to entry classifications, even if they have been in use for less than a year. Additionally, a few technical cleanup points, like swapping "his/her" for "their" and updating the list of bases on which an employer cannot discriminate to reflect the broader list that is already in effect in Section 36p of the Act. These minor language changes are proposed in the interest of clarity and consistency, and the University System is asking that the Merit Board approve the proposed changes and grant permission to submit them to the Secretary of State for publication in the Illinois Register via JCAR for notice and comment.

Ms. Blackwell asked for clarification on the "ask today" to approve these proposed changes to JCAR, while it was also stated today that the University System is planning on meeting with the Police Chiefs before presenting them to JCAR. Ms. Blackwell stated that it seemed premature to vote on it at this meeting, because there could be changes that she would assume would need to be voted on again. She further stated that she thought it was critical for the Police Chiefs to be involved and the HR Directors so that everyone can fully understand the ramifications of the proposed changes and make any necessary revisions that may result from that collaboration. She said that the requests that had been stated earlier in the meeting, establishing a joint advisory committee, transparency of vendor selection were completely reasonable and appropriate. She felt that the matter should be tabled until that collaboration could occur and be brought back to the Board later.

Ms. Miller stated that in keeping with the process, JCAR has two periods of notice for comments. The procedure for rulemaking is built for continued discussion and collaboration once language is proposed. She further stated that the agency's rulemaking rules specifically require that the

University System bring the rulemaking back to the Merit Board for a vote before proceeding to the Second Notice Period. Objections to this language via the JCAR process are allowed during the First Notice Period for comments. Changes can be made through this process and moving forward allows the University System to start the First Notice Period for comments.

Mr. Jenkins stated that he is an old legislative staffer and typically where these conversations start, where people can agree with the problem statement, they can disagree with the problem statement, and then a solution can be offered, and then move from that to a conversation about this. Now, in a regulatory process, typically, that happens before it hits at least the Merit Board, and it seems like we've had a pretty visceral reaction from the field by opening up this conversation. He stated his question was more about the authority of the state and the authority of the Merit Board to decide that there's a significant change. So, the subsections 3 and 4 are where the changes are being made so that all examination content shall be provided by the University System. That's what the existing language is, and so changing provided to the employer, the maintenance of those assessments will be maintained not by the state. It'll be maintained by the vendor pursuant to the next statement, which is 4. So those examinations for Police Officer, Police Sergeant, and Police Telecommunicator, if they're acquired, will be maintained by the vendor. Instead of them being maintained by the state and having the state use its own subject matter experts in the form of field experts like our chiefs and our police officers who are working in the field in our universities, you'll have a subject matter expert that may work for the vendor determining what's in the assessment, and then that assessment will be held not by the state, which is what current regulation is, it'll be held by that vendor. He further stated that it raises a concern about ownership, state's ownership of the assessment material, as opposed to a new policy which is not the state's ownership but a vendor's ownership, and that causes some concern because he felt at least one principle should have when making regulatory changes like this is that it should make it easier to hire qualified, competent, merit-based employees that are diverse and represent the needs of the field and not the reverse. He felt that if this item was tabled, we could gather more information.

Executive Director Schiesser commented that if Mr. Jenkins' question was "do I believe that working with the Police Chiefs and HR directors would be successful in allaying their concerns?", the answer is I don't know. Do I believe that we could successfully develop a new examination? The answer would be, no, not without a great deal of more expertise development based on the University System. She further stated that she would be happy to develop that testing expertise for these classifications, but it is not going to be a quick matter.

Ms. Craig Schilling commented she has four points to share. The first is I support the University System looking for a third party that has expertise in this space to do, to develop the testing. So, I think it's a good path to consider; however, on three elements that will lead me to most likely vote to table this, is the written versus digital. It also is the norm that people work with subject matter experts that are in the police and security roles, and a review period for key stakeholders of 11 days is not desirable. The final piece is we need to take a collaborative approach to these changes.

Mr. Kevedaras commented this is causing him a little bit of antagonism as he read the proposed changes. He appreciated both sides; however, he felt a lot more comfortable with that if he had some deeper background discussion information on it before we take any step. Executive Director Schiesser commented the University System would withdraw everything except 250.140. Mr. Simmons stated he would rather see a whole new, clean version. Executive Director Schiesser commented the University System would withdraw and reform.

### **Opportunities for a broader dialogue on stakeholder issues and system modification proposals**

Chair Butler stated he appreciated the opportunity to discuss his consultations with system stakeholders since becoming Chair of the Merit Board. He said that the Board had heard comments from spokespersons from the DER group and another from the EAC group and that he had met with both groups in person, and the comments were consistent with what he had learned from them. He had also met with representatives of two labor unions that represent a significant number of status employees and had spoken several times with the Executive Director, including alongside the former Chair, Julie Jones. He said he had also had a chance to dialogue with some of his board members, but not everyone.

He said he learned of several concerns in short: EAC has concerns about compliance, particularly open and continuous testing for openings within the system, the maintenance of registers, and the application of the rule of three, and pay equity. He further stated that everyone heard some of these concerns during the EAC report.

The DER group has advanced a set of system modification proposals that everyone has heard about from Ms. Painter, which concern the residency requirement, testing concerns for non-custom classes, limiting referrals to the top three scores, the rule of three, extra help extensions, and the unique situation posed by grant-funded positions. Within each of these broad categories are nuanced, sometimes highly technical concerns and ideas for how to address them. Solutions might be possible in that regard that can address some employer and employee concerns at the same time, are amenable to the unions because they do not stray too far from the principles of merit and fitness and permit unions access to the employees they represent or wish to represent, are administrable by the University System and Merit Board, and if needed, could win support in the General Assembly. There are concerns that have no easy solutions that check all those boxes and some that require attention on individual campuses that we can only do a little bit of it.

Chair Butler said that even with these tough issues, progress might be made through relationship building, recognition, and knowledge sharing. He said his intent was to gauge the willingness of various stakeholders to take some small steps toward relationship and capacity building aimed at perhaps a limited effort to make some system modifications or repairs as needed. He had been particularly focused on residency since this is a subject that both the DER group and EAC have addressed, where there seems to be an earnest desire to work together on something.

The current legislation, House Bill 3062, the group could continue the process of talking about some of the areas where there might be an emerging common ground among stakeholders, perhaps focusing first on where there has already been some constructive dialogue and getting some feedback on what might be the role of the Merit Board in convening the stakeholders, forming some consensus, and discussing modifications that might require legislative action, rulemaking, or commitments of some kind to improve compliance. The rulemaking front is an example of something that could benefit from some more formal collaboration. What could be the role of the Merit Board in this process? Could they perhaps form an ad hoc committee of some kind to convene a summit, followed by several meetings outside of our normal order? This could be a hybrid group of representatives of all the stakeholder groups. This is just one idea, and that he was open to more.

He said he needed to come to everyone at some point. There's obviously a need to do some relationship building and to see if everyone could come together on some system modification proposals where there might be a common ground and consensus. There's a lot of trust-building that he sensed had to happen and that he didn't think that it was fair to put all that burden on the executive director and the University System. The University System is a regulatory agency. They have a statute and rules that they must apply. They have audits that they have to conduct and as a board we must at least drive it forward. He was open to hearing what other people felt

Mr. Kvedaras commented the parallel would be in the police world, be officer-friendly, or the corporate world might be a community liaison or something. But the point is to have a body, a representative of a greater group, to be interfaced back and forth, to even identify issues, to start discussions. He also likes what the Chair said, this shouldn't just be dumped on the executive director because that office is busy already. This is a statewide body that we really need to try to address and if they develop an ad hoc committee, how many of our representatives could participate in such a committee?

Ms. Miller stated it is considered a gathering that must follow the Open Meetings Act requirements if we have a majority of a quorum gathered for either the Merit Board or for EAC. It would just mean that we must set an agenda and have it in an open place for this meeting. It doesn't prohibit us from doing that. Executive Director Schiesser stated that the quorum of the Merit Board is six. A majority of the quorum would be four.

Mr. Simmons suggested the Executive Committee. Chair Butler stated a meeting of the Executive Committee would have to be an Open Meeting. He asked if this is within the Board's purview to do this work and if the Board felt it was, then he could work with the Chair and the other members of the Executive Committee, and they could circulate and think about some format for them doing this and sharing with the group,

Ms. Craig Schilling stated this is an important question. The big question is the edict of a board member currently? And what are the joint expectations we have as a Board as to the operating principles that occur? There are a lot of differences of opinions and a lot of different objectives, a lot of different goals. The expectation is we have good decision-making, good ways of working,

and guiding principles. But she didn't know if that meant the Board developed them. I'm not opposed to leaning in, but there are a lot of really great professionals who are working in this space and working in the executive office that would be way more qualified. But she didn't know that the Board serving on this committee was the best use of everyone's time or their expertise or lack of it.

Mr. Kvedaras commented he didn't think they would be determining the best course of action. He felt at least trying to decide if we do have an issue that's worthy of further exploration, then we might go back to the subject matter experts who represented us in the executive director's office. At least we'll have a chance to try to weed through some of this noise and try to identify what's worthy or what needs to be addressed and the needs to be explored further.

Chair Butler stated a good example is residency. There's been a lot of dialogue about residency. He suggested there's value in the board convening the parties, helping clarify what the issues are, and helping bring people together who are not reaching consensus. There might be a consensus change on the rule of three. There might be something that could be done with extra help, but he didn't think it was the Board's job necessarily to make the suggestions, but to bring the parties together and make sure that that dialogue was happening.

Ms. Baurer stated that we tend to be reactive and not proactive Board. The chair is trying to get ahead of it and be more proactive and she was very supportive of that. In her view, a completely reactive mode and just listening to what comes to us instead of providing more feedback earlier in the process.

Mr. Jenkins stated he is here pursuant to his role as a member of the Board of Trustees at Illinois State University. Part of the dilemma, maybe legally, but more ethically, is getting out in front of my institution regarding public policy questions and he thinks we need some legal counsel thoughts on, but more so maybe for those of us in this kind of role. As a representative, he felt his responsibility was to listen to the professionals and the staff that he leads and work with the institution and reflect upon that as we bring up issues. It is somewhat reactive to what's moving forward and so he agreed with everything that was said, there's lots of public policy things he would like to see changed that he felt would make our institutions a lot more flexible and a lot more nimble and a lot more student-centered.

Chair Butler stated part of this process is taking stock theoretically of what we are. I think we're self-regulating our industry when it comes to the way university employees are treated and the working conditions that they have. He felt NIU's perspective will always be voiced by NIU and its human resources directors, and on the employee side, the representatives who serve on EAC. To bring those parties together with other university stakeholders and see if we can spot signs of common ground and develop that further to see if there's a proposal that would serve some of the interests and bring the system into the modern age and some of the issues of streamlining and making things more adaptable. At the same time, he knows that the University System needs an administrable policy. He said he did not see anyone saying no to this. He wants to work with the executive director to see what we might think in terms of structure and then perhaps propose

something to the Board. Everything must be voluntary, the Board must create interest on the part of the stakeholders to believe that if they come to something that we're setting up for them, there's the possibility of things improving based on what they're most concerned about. He said that if the members don't like this and want to talk about it with him further to reach out to him. He said Ms. Painter is right; there is a very good record of concerns and proposals that need to be accessed. That could be one of the first steps, which is to sort of learn what people are saying, what the problem is and what their potential solutions are.

### **Classification, Examination, and Compensation review of recent activities – Noel Rowe**

Executive Director Schiesser suggested that to save time, the Board could review the written documents provided for this agenda item.

### **Governance, Risk, and Compliance Audit Program review of recent activities – Noel Rowe**

Executive Director Schiesser suggested that to save time, the Board could review the written documents provided for this agenda item.

### **Report of the Executive Director – Gail Schiesser**

Executive Director Schiesser stated that the University System has hired four people since the last meeting, Legal Counsel, Maggie Miller, and three HR Representatives, Brett Wawrzynek, Janea Parker, and Maleah Perry. The agency's previous Legal Counsel left on January 31, 2025, and an HR Officer left February 15, 2025. The agency dismissed one employee during their probationary period in January 2025.

Ms. Schiesser stated that the second piece of rulemaking on the agenda related to rulemaking which had already been approved by the Merit Board and was effective January 31, 2025, and published in the Illinois Register on February 21, 2025.

The Auditor General has completed the 2023/2024 audit with two findings, both of which suggest from the auditors that we need to improve processes and policies. We are working on those processes and policies

The fourth piece in her report is regarding the current budget, FY25. We were appropriated \$1,444,500; we have left unexpended at this point \$578,000 with several months of the fiscal year left.

### **Report of Legal Counsel – Maggie Miller**

Maggie Miller stated that there was one case pending in the appellate court involving the Merit Board. Vincent Bradford, a former employee at the University of Illinois Chicago, filed a complaint for administrative review in the Circuit Court of Cook County, requesting a review of the Merit

Board's December 10, 2021, decision to discharge him. The Illinois Attorney General's office represents the Merit Board and the University System in this matter. Mr. Bradford prepared and served a second amended complaint, which he filed after the filing deadline set by the court. The Attorney General's office filed a motion to dismiss. The motion for dismissal was granted, and Mr. Bradford has filed the notice of appeal and a supplement to the record regarding that dismissal. The court granted his motion to supplement the record on December 18. The matter was fully briefed and is currently awaiting a decision from the appellate court.

**Other Items as presented**

Chair Butler stated that the Board meeting scheduled in July would be moved to August 19, 2025.

Chair Butler made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Ms. Blackwell seconded Chair Butler's motion. In accordance with the Merit Board Bylaws, a roll call vote was taken, and the motion was approved with the following vote:

Chair Butler .....Aye  
Mr. Cepeda.....Absent  
Ms. Craig Schilling .....Aye  
Mr. Jenkins .....Aye  
Mr. Kvedaras .....Aye  
Dr. Lang .....Aye  
Mr. Phillips .....Absent  
Mr. Quiara .....Aye  
Mr. Simmons .....Aye  
Ms. Baurer.....Aye  
Ms. Blackwell .....Aye

The meeting adjourned at 3:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

*/s/ Teresa Rademacher*

Teresa Rademacher  
Secretary for the Merit Board

APPROVED:

*/s/ John Butler*

John Butler, Chair  
University Civil Service Merit Board

August 19, 2025

Date

