



MINUTES OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
MEETING OF THE UNIVERSITY CIVIL SERVICE MERIT BOARD –
JANUARY 30, 2026

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

(Video Conference)
University of Illinois Springfield 2420 Theodore Dreiser Ln. BSB 40
Springfield, IL 62703

(Video Conference)
Southern Illinois University Carbondale 1263 Lincoln Dr.
Student Services Rm 307
Carbondale, IL 62901

The Executive meeting began at 11:04 am.

Members present at the State Universities Civil Service System (University System) were: John Butler, Chair, from the Northern Illinois University Board of Trustees; Barb Baurer from the Eastern Illinois University Board of Trustees; and Jim Kvedaras from the Governors State University Board of Trustees.

Gail Schiesser, Executive Director, and Maggie Miller, Legal Counsel, were also present. Various members of the Employee Advisory Committee (EAC) and University System staff were also in attendance.

The discussion began with a focus on strengthening relationships and communication between the Merit Board and EAC. EAC members discussed how trustees are selected to serve on the Merit Board and emphasized that, while trustees may serve their individual universities, their fiduciary duty on the Merit Board is to the University System. A major theme was the need to rebuild open, informal, and continuous dialogue among the Merit Board, EAC, and HR Directors to foster collaboration. EAC members highlighted the importance of in-person meetings for effectiveness but raised concerns about universities refusing to fund required travel expenses for EAC members, despite statutory provisions requiring reimbursement. There was also discussion about governance limitations, what authority the Merit Board does and does not have, particularly regarding legislative changes.

EAC members raised concerns about open and continuous testing, highlighting challenges in maintaining the integrity, accessibility, and effectiveness of the civil service system. The discussion focused on credential assessments and the “rule of three,” emphasizing the importance of active registers to streamline hiring and preserve fairness. The University System

Office clarified that the credential assessment serves as the examination, scored using a rubric aligned with classification-specific knowledge, skills, and abilities, producing a ranked register from which the top three scorers are certified for interviews. Worries were expressed that many universities have shifted away from maintaining open registers, requiring applicants to apply only for specific vacancies, which can extend hiring timelines from weeks to six months. EAC members stated that maintaining ongoing registers reduces delays, protects candidate choice, and ensures qualified applicants are not excluded due to brief posting windows.

The discussion emphasized that lengthy hiring timelines are generally driven not by the University System rules (“rule of three”) but by universities’ internal practices and multi-layered interview procedures. Even after HR certifies the top three candidates from a register, departments often add email questionnaires, Zoom or in-person interviews, background checks, and multiple internal approvals, extending the process for months. EAC members stressed that when registers are properly maintained and used as intended under administrative rules, hiring can occur quickly, sometimes within weeks, but bypassing open and continuous testing, requiring repeated applications, or failing to maintain active registers creates inefficiency and discourages applicants. Concerns were raised about proposals such as “broad banding” scores, which could weaken the exam ranking function, and about trade classifications, where limited testing windows and poor notifications reduce opportunities. Ultimately, the group reinforced that registers are embedded in administrative law, protect fairness and opportunity, support faster hiring when properly applied, and should not be displaced by internal practices.

The discussion addressed the distinction between competency-based evaluation and traditional credential assessment in hiring. The University System noted that credential assessments focus on formal qualifications such as degrees, certifications, and years of experience, while competency evaluations emphasize demonstrable knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs), highlighting what a candidate can actually do. The shift toward competency-based hiring reflects broader HR modernization efforts and aims to expand opportunity for individuals who have gained skills through alternative routes, such as military service, apprenticeships, or hands-on experience, even if they lack formal credentials. The focus is on improving how candidates are evaluated.

The discussion next addressed that while the Merit Board holds statutory responsibility for establishing salary ranges, operational authorities have long been delegated to universities. It was noted that below-minimum pay requires correction and back pay. Salary competitiveness is a primary challenge: candidates often decline offers due to higher private sector pay or leave for state positions offering better compensation. Additional concerns included discrepancies between advertised ranges and final offers, which harm recruitment credibility and can discourage promotions when advancement may result in little or no financial gain.

The discussion also addressed proposals to expand the “rule of three,” noting that data did not consistently support improved hiring outcomes, and that multiple candidates often share the same score, meaning top three lists often already include more than three individuals. The employers have not presented EAC with evidence that their proposal regarding the “Rule of Three” would benefit the system. Expanding the referral rule risks diluting the examination’s ranked structure. Register maintenance and compliance were emphasized. Removal of an

applicant from a register is required only for hires, withdrawals, death, or disqualifications, with permissive removals allowed in specific circumstances. The larger concern is whether registers are being properly created and used, not the complexity of maintenance.

The discussion highlighted concerns about salary competitiveness, internal compliance gaps, salary compression, and limited upward mobility, particularly within civil service classifications. EAC members described a perceived cultural hierarchy placing faculty and Academic Professional roles above civil service employees, contributing to disparities in compensation, flexibility, and institutional regard. Issues were raised regarding inconsistent adherence to established salary ranges, promotion disincentives caused by salary compression, and benefit inequities that link benefit amounts to FLSA status under the Fair Labor Standards Act.

There was openness to re-engaging in structured, good-faith dialogue through a smaller empowered group to pursue incremental, data-informed reforms, improve transparency, and rebuild trust among stakeholders, provided negotiations are meaningful, representative, and focused on achievable progress.

The meeting adjourned at 3:57 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

/s/ Jennifer Miles

Jennifer Miles
Secretary for the Merit Board

APPROVED:

/s/ John Butler

John Butler, Chair
University Civil Service Merit Board

August 19, 2026

Date