SPECIAL MEETING OF THE UNIVERSITY CIVIL SERVICE MERIT BOARD
OCTOBER 16, 2026

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

Governors State University
1 University Parkway
Room C2315
University Park, IL

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

Northern Illinois University
Altgeld Hall, Room 203
DeKalb, IL

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

University of Illinois at Chicago
Discovery Partners Institute
200 S Wacker Drive
Conference Room 2017 (20TH Floor)
Chicago, IL

Call to Order and Roll Call – John Butler, Chair

Chair Butler called the meeting to order at 11:03 pm.

Members present at the State Universities Civil Service System (University System or agency) and posted designated sites were: John Butler, Chair, Jose Alba, Barb Baurer, Tami Craig Schilling (left at 12:40 pm), Jim Kvedaras, Robert Navarro, J. Todd Phillips (left at 11:45 am), Jason Quiara, and John Simmons.

Members absent were Carolyn Blackwell and Ramon Cepeda.

Gail Schiesser, Executive Director; Maggie Miller, Legal Counsel; and Jennifer Miles, Secretary for the Merit Board, were also present.

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

Chair Butler stated that Mr. Kvedaras was unable to participate in one of the meeting locations due to a family emergency. As required by the Open Meetings Act, the Merit Board took action to allow him to participate at a non-public site.

Mr. Simmons moved to approve Mr. Kvederas' participation in the meeting at a non-public site due to a family emergency. 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
Mr. Alba.....Aye
Ms. Baurer.....Aye
Ms. Blackwell .....Absent
Chair Butler .....Aye
Mr. Cepeda.....Absent
Ms. Craig Schilling .....Absent
Mr. Kvedaras .....Absent
Dr. Navarro.....Aye
Mr. Phillips .....Aye
Mr. Quiara .....Absent

Chair Butler stated that Ms. Craig Schilling was unable to participate at one of the meeting locations due to a family emergency commitment. As required by the Open Meetings Act, the Merit Board took action to allow her to participate at a non-public site.

Mr. Simmons moved to approve Ms. Craig Schilling's participation in the meeting at a non-public site due to a family emergency. Mr. Phillips 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
Mr. Alba.....Aye
Ms. Baurer.....Aye
Ms. Blackwell .....Absent
Chair Butler .....Aye
Mr. Cepeda.....Absent
Ms. Craig Schilling .....Absent
Mr. Kvedaras .....Aye
Dr. Navarro.....Aye
Mr. Phillips .....Aye
Mr. Quiara .....Absent

Chair Butler stated that Mr. Quiara was unable to participate at one of the meeting locations due to a work commitment. As required by the Open Meetings Act, the Merit Board took action to allow him to participate at a non-public site.

Mr. Kvedaras moved to approve Mr. Quiara's participation in the meeting at a non-public site due to a work commitment. Mr. Simmons 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. Navarro.....Aye
Mr. Phillips .....Aye
Mr. Quiara .....Absent

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

Approval of the Agenda for the Special Meeting of the Merit Board – John Butler, Chair

Chair Butler asked for a motion to approve the agenda for October 16, 2026. Mr. Simmons moved to approve the agenda for the Special 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
Mr. Alba.....Aye
Ms. Baurer.....Aye
Ms. Blackwell .....Absent
Chair Butler .....Aye
Mr. Cepeda.....Absent
Ms. Craig Schilling .....Aye
Mr. Kvedaras.....Aye
Dr. Navarro.....Aye
Mr. Phillips .....Aye
Mr. Quiara.....Aye

Public Comments

There were no requests for public comments.

Discussion of Plan for Evaluation of Executive Director

Chair Butler provided a draft of a proposed process and format for the Executive Director's performance evaluation, developed in consultation with the Executive Director and Legal Counsel to the Board members. Chair Butler noted that the Merit Board had not previously conducted an evaluation of the current Executive Director, who was appointed Interim Executive Director effective July 1, 2021, and Executive Director effective December 16, 2021.

The proposed plan consists of two primary components: the evaluation process and the format for the 2026 evaluation. Chair Butler explained that the initial evaluation would not be based on goals or priorities previously established and approved by the Board. Although the 2025 Annual Report identifies various action plans, the proposed process would allow the Executive Director to provide context regarding the agency's priorities and her performance.

The proposed self-appraisal would include three parts. Part one would be a summary of the position, describing the Executive Director's understanding of the agency's fundamental purpose and scope, as well as the Executive Director's responsibilities. Part two would summarize the Executive Director's priorities, goals, activities, and outcomes for 2026, with relevant context from the preceding period. Part three would include goals, priorities, collaborative efforts, and plans for 2027. The Executive Director would have flexibility to organize this section in the manner she considers most appropriate.

The fourth part of the proposed process would address the Board's evaluation and feedback, including whether and how to seek input from staff and other stakeholders. The Chair also provided five document options for the Board to consider as it prepares for the evaluation. The Chair referenced a 2021 audit finding concerning performance evaluations conducted on the University System, including the Board's evaluation of the Executive Director. The finding was ultimately corrected and was not repeated.

Ms. Craig Schilling emphasized the importance of moving forward with the evaluation, noting that employees deserve feedback on their performance and an opportunity to provide input. She distinguished between performance and development, explaining that performance evaluation assesses results against goals and expectations, while professional development focuses on growth, areas for improvement, and future opportunities. She recommended that the process address both components.

Chair Butler noted that the proposed process could include a 360-degree review. He noted that implementing a formal process before the November meeting might not be feasible.

Mr. Kvedaras asked whether the Merit Board Bylaws already required the Board to evaluate the Executive Director. The Chair confirmed that the bylaws provide that the Merit Board shall periodically evaluate the Executive Director's performance and establish employment conditions as necessary. Chair Butler suggested that the Board consider incorporating additional procedural requirements into its Bylaws to formalize the evaluation process.

Mr. Alba asked whether the evaluation would measure performance against organizational benchmarks established by the Board or against goals established by the Executive Director. The Chair explained that the Executive Director will first describe the agency's recent priorities and her assessment of organizational needs. This information would provide a basis for Board feedback and discussion regarding management, planning, and future priorities. The Chair stated that performance discussions would occur in a closed session.

The Chair further explained that the initial evaluation would focus primarily on performance during 2026, and possibly a portion of 2025. The first two sections of the self-appraisal would provide context and address past and current performance, while the third would focus on future priorities.

Mr. Phillips asked whether the evaluation would follow a calendar year or a fiscal year and what outcomes the evaluation might produce beyond feedback, including potential salary adjustments, other employment-related actions, or warning actions. The Chair initially suggested using the calendar year but indicated that aligning the process with the fiscal year would also be

appropriate. Mr. Phillips supported aligning the evaluation with the fiscal year for budgetary considerations. He also emphasized the importance of obtaining staff and stakeholder feedback to provide the Board with perspectives it might not otherwise receive.

Executive Director Schiesser confirmed that staff salary adjustments generally occur in the first quarter of the fiscal year, following the budget-planning process. Any adjustment to the Executive Director's compensation would need to be considered within the applicable budget framework. The Chair noted that no specific agreement currently establishes how the Board addresses compensation changes following an evaluation.

Executive Director Schiesser emphasized the value of receiving feedback. The Chair agreed that feedback could be provided in November on parts one, two, and three, with a mid-year review. Ms. Craig Schilling opposed delaying feedback until the end of the fiscal year, noting that the Executive Director should receive timely feedback from the initial evaluation. The Board acknowledged the need to balance timely feedback with the workload associated with implementing the process.

Mr. Alba asked whether the Board would use a rating scale, such as exceeding expectations, meeting expectations, or needs improvement. Mr. Butler noted that a rubric had been used in a previous Executive Director evaluation and suggested that the Board consider adopting a similar approach. Mr. Kvedaras observed that a rating system would be more useful once clear and measurable goals had been established.

Chair Butler explained that the existing practice has generally provided the Executive Director with the same salary increase as other staff members, unless a different determination is made. The Executive Director confirmed this was the current process.

Ms. Baurer supported beginning the evaluation process in November while recognizing that the Board might not be able to complete every component by that meeting. She also suggested that the Executive Director be invited to identify ways the Board could improve its own practices to better support the agency's priorities. The Chair agreed that this input could be included in the narrative describing the Executive Director's role and responsibilities.

The Board discussed options for gathering feedback from staff and other stakeholders, including a formal 360-degree review. Ms. Baurer described an approach used at her university in which the board chair and vice chair gather input from selected employees and HR representatives rather than surveying the entire workforce. She recommended using specific questions to create a structured process that ensured consistency in feedback.

Mr. Kvedaras cautioned that stakeholder feedback must be evaluated in the context of the agency's regulatory responsibilities. Complaints or concerns from individuals subject to the agency's jurisdiction may reflect disagreements with statutory or regulatory requirements rather than the Executive Director's performance. He emphasized the importance of considering such context when reviewing responses.

Mr. Navarro asked the Board to establish a deadline for the self-appraisal and clarify the balance between allowing the Executive Director flexibility in its format and identifying the information

the Board expects to receive. He supported beginning with the self-appraisal in November and using the following six months to identify additional stakeholders and develop a broader feedback process.

The Chair reiterated that the proposed format was intended to provide guidance without unduly restricting the Executive Director's discretion. The Executive Director could organize the self-appraisal by functional area, operational unit, or another appropriate structure.

The Executive Director indicated that the proposed timeline was feasible and that she could submit the first three sections for the November meeting. She supported beginning the Board's evaluation discussions shortly thereafter or early in the first quarter of the following year. Chair Butler noted that informal stakeholder outreach could occur alongside development of a more formal review process, with the results informing the 2027 evaluation.

Mr. Phillips emphasized that the Board should provide staff with an opportunity to offer feedback without procurement requirements or other procedural concerns that would prevent this process. He suggested that an anonymous staff questionnaire could provide useful input without requiring an external consultant.

The Chair supported developing a questionnaire for staff before the November meeting but noted the importance of protecting confidentiality. The Executive Director stated that she had no objection to the outreach and would not participate in the process.

Ms. Miller noted that if there is not a quorum of the body working together on those tasks, there is no meeting and that it complies with applicable Open Meetings Act requirements, including requirements concerning quorum and meetings.

The Board also discussed which stakeholder groups should be consulted. The Executive Director identified the Designated Employer Representatives (DERs), and Human Resources leaders at participating institutions. She suggested beginning with the DERs as an initial stakeholder group and expanding outreach in future evaluation cycles. The Board discussed the value of using consistent questions, including what is working well and what could be improved, while allowing respondents to provide additional relevant information.

The Chair proposed that the Executive Director submit the first three sections of the self-appraisal by November 5, to allow time for distribution to Board members and review before the November meeting. The Executive Director confirmed that this deadline was achievable. The Chair indicated that a draft could be shared with him in advance, if helpful, and that the materials would be distributed to Board members as soon as practicable, ideally by November 6 and no later than November 9. Board members would have the following week to review the materials and direct questions or requests for additional information to the Chair or Executive Director.

The Chair stated that the initial evaluation would be included on the agenda for the November meeting and recommended allocating additional time in members' schedules for discussion. The Chair preferred that the evaluation be the final agenda item so the Board could enter into closed session without requiring staff and others to return for subsequent business.

The Chair also indicated that the Board could develop a staff questionnaire in the coming week and distribute it to staff in advance of the November meeting. The Board would establish a process to protect confidentiality to the extent practicable and determine how the responses would be reviewed.

The Board expressed support for proceeding with the initial evaluation in November, beginning with the Executive Director's self-appraisal and staff feedback, while continuing to develop the broader evaluation process and stakeholder outreach.

Discussion of Amending the Merit Board Bylaws to Increase the Quorum for the Executive Committee

The Chair proposed an amendment to the bylaws that would change the current three-member quorum to a four-member quorum of the Executive Committee, with the remainder of the language unchanged. The amendment for the proposed language was previously provided to the Board members. The Chair indicated that it would be introduced for consideration at the November meeting.

Other Items as presented

Chair Butler stated that the next meeting is scheduled for November 17, 2026.

Mr. Simmons moved to adjourn the meeting. Dr. Navarro seconded Mr. Simmons' motion. In accordance with the Merit Board Bylaws, a roll call vote was taken, and the motion was approved with the following vote:

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

The meeting adjourned at 12:43 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

November 17, 2026
Date