

MINUTES  
Special Meeting of Board of Trustees Illinois State University  
March 18, 2024

Trustee Bohn: In accordance with the board's bylaws, as Chairperson I will now call the special meeting of the Board of Trustees of Illinois State University to order at 10:32 a.m. I note for the record that notice of today's meeting was posted in accordance with the Illinois Open Meetings Act, and that the public has been notified of the date, time, and location of this meeting. As included in the notice of the meeting, the university has provided a YouTube link that allows all interested persons to contemporaneously view the meeting and hear all discussion and votes. For the record, I note that in accordance with the provisions of the Open Meetings Act, a member not physically present at the meeting and participating through other means needs to state the reason they are prevented from physically attending because of (1) personal illness or disability (2) employment purposes or the business of the public body (3) a family or other emergency. Trustee Navarro, will you call the roll.

Trustee Navarro: Trustee Bohn.

Trustee Bohn: Present.

Trustee Navarro: Trustee Ebikhumi.

Trustee Ebikhumi: Present.

Trustee Navarro: Trustee Jenkins.

Trustee Jenkins: Present.

Trustee Navarro: Trustee Merminga.

Trustee Merminga: Present.

Trustee Navarro: Trustee Navarro. Present. Trustee Tillis.

Trustee Tillis: Present.

Trustee Navarro: We have a quorum. The following individuals have requested to attend today's meeting remotely. As a reminder, when your name is called, please state the reason you are prevented from physically attending. Julie Annette Jones.

Trustee Jones: Employment purposes.

Trustee Bohn: Thank you, Trustee Navarro. Could I have a motion and a second to permit Trustee Julie Jones to join us by videoconference to officially attend and participate in today's meeting?

Trustee Navarro: I so move.

Trustee Bohn: Trustee Navarro made the motion. Second?

Trustee Ebikhumi: Second.

Trustee Bohn: Trustee Ebikhumi. All those in favor say aye.

Multiple people: Aye.

Trustee Bohn: Opposed? The motion is approved. Trustee Jones, you may now participate in today's meeting by videoconference.

Trustee Jones: Thank you.

**Approval of Agenda**

Trustee Bohn: You have before you the agenda for today's meeting. May I have a motion and a second to approve the agenda?

Trustee Jenkins: So moved.

Trustee Bohn: Trustee Jenkins made the motion. Is there a second?

Trustee Merminga: Second.

Trustee Bohn: Trustee Merminga second. Is there any discussion? Having no discussion, all those in favor say aye.

Multiple people: Aye.

Trustee Bohn: Opposed? The agenda is approved.

**Public Comment**

Trustee Bohn: Next we have Public Comment, but no one has signed up for public comments today, so we will proceed.

Before moving into closed session, I want to thank the ISU community for the thoughtful participation shown during the presidential search process. After closed session, new business will be taken up by the board as noted on the agenda. I will now entertain a motion to move into closed session to discuss personnel matters as generally described under 5ILCS120/2C1 and C3 specific to the presidential search. May I have a motion and a second to approve the motion to move into closed session for the purposes identified?

Trustee Jenkins: So moved.

Trustee Bohn: Trustee Jenkins made the motion. Is there a second?

Trustee Merminga: Second.

Trustee Bohn: Trustee Merminga second. Any discussion? Hearing no discussion, will the Secretary please call for a roll call vote.

Trustee Navarro: Trustee Bohn.

Trustee Bohn: Yes.

Trustee Navarro: Trustee Ebikhumi.

Trustee Ebikhumi: Yes.

Trustee Navarro: Trustee Jenkins.

Trustee Jenkins: Yes.

Trustee Navarro: Trustee Jones.

Trustee Jones: Yes.

Trustee Navarro: Trustee Merminga.

Trustee Merminga: Yes.

Trustee Navarro: Trustee Navarro. Yes. Trustee Tillis.

Trustee Tillis: Yes.

Trustee Bohn: The motion is approved. It is 10:35 a.m. and the board will now move into closed session and will reopen at the conclusion of the closed session.

### **Reopening After Closed Session**

Trustee Bohn: It is 10:58 a.m. and having returned to public session, we will move to the agenda item regarding the appointment of the 1<sup>st</sup> President of Illinois State University and approval of the Presidential Employment Agreement. I want to start by thanking the Presidential Search Committee for providing the Board of Trustees with invaluable information to help guide the presidential search process. I want to also thank the ISU community for their input in this very important decision and my fellow board members for their cooperation, patience, leadership and professionalism during this process. Finally, I want to thank the ISU administration and support staff for all they have provided to the board. As an aside, they provided too good of meals for us, because I've gained some weight throughout this process. [laughter] On February 17<sup>th</sup>, 2023, the university had a transition in the presidency, and Dr. Aondover Tarhule was appointed as the Interim President of the university. The Board of Trustees opted to launch an open national search and formed a Presidential Search Committee which was charged with preparing a presidential profile and presenting to the Board of Trustees five qualified candidates for consideration. The results of the work of the Presidential Search Committee were presented to the Board of Trustees, and on-campus interviews were conducted of four finalist candidates after one candidate withdrew for personal reasons. After consideration of the work performed by the Presidential Search Committee, evaluation of the finalist candidates and the feedback received from faculty, staff, students, and other members of the university community, the Board of Trustees reached a consensus to pursue Dr. Tarhule as the next permanent president of the university and authorized the commencement of contract negotiations between the parties over the terms and conditions of such an appointment. At today's Special Meeting of the Board of Trustees, the board will take a vote to determine the appointment of Dr. Aondover Tarhule as the 21<sup>st</sup> President of Illinois State University as set forth in the draft resolution attached to the meeting materials. A full copy of the proposed Presidential Employment Agreement was posted 48 hours in advance of this meeting. As set forth in the resolution, the principle financial terms of the proposed agreement are as follows:

- (1) A base salary of \$450,000 is proposed.
- (2) Retirement contributions in the form of \$25,000 to the SERS 403b plan and \$25,000 to the SERS 457 plan for each fiscal year completed as President.
- (3) A contract for four years.
- (4) A requirement that the President reside in the university residence.
- (5) A reasonable moving expense allowance of \$20,000.
- (6) The use of a full-sized automobile.
- (7) Severance payment clauses in compliance with the Illinois Government Severance Pay Act.

A copy of the entire agreement is included in your board materials for this meeting. Trustees were given the opportunity to review the contract before the meeting, and following a motion on the agenda item, I invited the trustees to give their feedback during the open session of this meeting. I will now call for a motion to approve this agenda item, which includes Resolution Number 2024.03/18, Appointment of the 21<sup>st</sup> President of Illinois State University and Approval of the Presidential Employment Agreement.

Trustee Navarro: I so move.

Trustee Bohn: Trustee Navarro made the motion. Is there a second?

Trustee Merminga: Second.

Trustee Bohn: Trustee Meringa second. I will now open the floor for discussion from the board members.

Trustee Navarro: Well, I would just like to say to Dr. Tarhule that I'm certainly encouraged by his actions on campus this past year, and I'm very excited about the future of our campus. So I'm looking forward to what's ahead.

Trustee Bohn: Today the board will appoint a president who will set the tone for Illinois State University and lead the university forward. I would ask all ISU leaders, faculty, staff, students, alumni, ISU Foundation Board members, and the Bloomington-Normal community to support Dr. Tarhule as he works to move Illinois State forward. As the board takes a vote, they are also making a pledge to do everything they can to help him be successful in the President's role. I would now call for a roll call vote. Trustee Navarro, will you call for a roll call vote.

Trustee Navarro: Trustee Bohn.

Trustee Bohn: Yes.

Trustee Navarro: Trustee Ebikhumi.

Trustee Ebikhumi: Yes.

Trustee Navarro: Trustee Jenkins.

Trustee Jenkins: Yes.

Trustee Navarro: Trustee Jones.

Trustee Jones: Yes.

Trustee Navarro: Trustee Meringa.

Trustee Meringa: Yes.

Trustee Navarro: Trustee Navarro. Yes. Trustee Tillis.

Trustee Tillis: Yes.

Trustee Bohn: The agenda item and the task resolution is approved. It is my distinct honor as Chair of the Board of Illinois State University to congratulate our next President, Dr. Aondover Tarhule on becoming the 21<sup>st</sup> President of Illinois State University. Congratulations, Dr. Tarhule. [applause]

(shaking of hands and presentation of flowers to Dr. Roos Tarhule)

I would like to offer an opportunity for President Tarhule to share remarks.

President Tarhule: Thank you so much, Chairperson Bohn. Members of the Board of Trustees, esteemed faculty and staff, honored guests, beloved students, with profound gratitude and humility I accept the incredible honor of serving as Illinois State's 21<sup>st</sup> President. First and foremost, I must express my deepest appreciation to the Board of Trustees for entrusting me with this vital leadership role. I'm also immensely grateful to the Illinois State Presidential Search Committee, Parker Executive Search, students, faculty, staff, alumni, donors, and community members who engaged in the search process and recommended or otherwise supported my candidacy. To all Illinois State dedicated faculty and staff, your passion for teaching, research, and service sets the standard for academic excellence, and I am honored to work alongside such consummate professionals. To all students, you are the heart and soul of Illinois State. Your curiosity, creativity, energy and resilience remind us daily of the transformative power of education. It also reminds us of the bright future that lies ahead for our community and our

country. I have no doubt, no doubt at all, that you will all go on to do great things. As President, I pledge to tirelessly advocate for you, ensuring that you have access to the resources, support, and opportunities you need to thrive personally, academically, and professionally. To my colleagues and cabinet members, I am but one piece of the complex machinery that makes Illinois State work. That machine, led by you, would grind to a halt were it not for the countless hours you commit to making difficult decisions and courageous choices each and every day. I could not be prouder to serve with such a dedicated team of leaders, impact makers, visionaries, and decision makers. To our community stakeholders, your faith and passion for all things Illinois State makes the Bloomington-Normal surrounding area and Illinois State communities special.

From the moment I stepped on campus to interview for the position of Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs, the community's investment and dedication to the success of Illinois State was clear and heartwarming. My wife, Roos, and I have felt welcomed, accepted and supported here in Bloomington-Normal more than anywhere else we have lived, which is saying a lot because we have enjoyed every place we have lived. Under my leadership, Illinois State will remain visible, engaged, and a collaborative partner committed to improving the quality of life and enhancing the sense of belonging for everyone in our community.

Finally, none of this would be possible without the steadfast support of alumni, friends, and donors. Your support inspires and gives us strength. Your generosity and commitment to our shared mission allow us to make Illinois State University education possible for countless numbers of students who might otherwise not have that life-changing experience. Individually and collectively, you make a tangible difference in our students' lives and our institution's vitality.

Higher education faces a critical and defining moment in time. We are confronted with the risk of declining student enrollment, financial stress, diminished public trust in the value of a college degree, and rapidly changing technology and workforce expectations, to name just a few. As I stated in my application later, all universities must adapt to these challenges and opportunities. Those that are able to do so effectively will succeed and thrive. Those who cannot will fall behind and may even fail altogether. My highest priority as the 21<sup>st</sup> President is that Illinois State successfully navigates this moment and positions itself to succeed, thrive, and be resilient. I invite all our friends and stakeholders to join me in this commitment. Let us embrace the challenges and opportunities ahead with courage, compassion, and a steadfast commitment to our shared values. Together we will chart a course for continued excellence, innovation, and impact, ensuring that our university remains a beacon of knowledge, opportunity, and inspiration for generations to come.

This moment is not just a personal achievement for me. It is the culmination of the dreams that began with an illiterate peasant farmer in Nigeria more than half a century ago. While having no formal education himself, that farmer, my father, had the prescience to understand the transformative power of education and encouraged and supported his children with every ounce of his will and resources. Dad, I hope you're watching from above. I owe this moment to you. I will also forever be indebted to my mom and the many teachers and mentors who believed in me and supported me along the way. To my greatest cheerleader, my friend, my partner, and my wife Roos, I owe you everything. We have come a long way together in the past 32 years. I look forward with confidence and excitement as we continue in lockstep on the journey ahead. And to everyone, your confidence in me is both humbling and inspiring. I commit to doing everything I can to justify that confidence, uphold the values and principles that have defined Illinois State for 167 years, and leverage your success and solid foundation for greater successes and resilience. Thank you, and Go You Redbirds. [applause]

Trustee Bohn: Thank you, President Tarhule, for those heartfelt words. And, again, congratulations. You have our confidence, and we look forward to working together to advance the mission of Illinois State University. Prior to moving forward, I want to take one last moment to thank my fellow trustees, the Presidential Search Committee, and numerous individuals who supported the board and search committee throughout the search process. Our most sincere thanks to the staff in the Office of the President, Human Resources, the technology, event and catering staff in Event Management, Dining and Hospitality, Web And Interactive Communications, the Office of Technology Solutions and Parker Executive Search. Your time, talent, and service were invaluable to the success of this search.

In addition, I would like to express our gratitude to the many students, faculty, staff, alums, donors, community members and friends of Illinois State University who participated in the search process. As President Tarhule mentioned, it's no secret that there are significant challenges facing higher education. In the coming months and

years there are many goals to accomplish. We are not immune to the challenges ahead. And although ISU has a great story to tell with steady and growing enrollment, the expansion of Nursing, a new College of Engineering, numerous campus renovations, and significant fund-raising success to name a few, now is the time to act to ensure the university's success for the future. Therefore, the board plans to task President Tarhule with working with the Vice President for Finance and Planning to undertake, as a matter of priority, a comprehensive analysis of Illinois State finances and budgets and take appropriate steps to ensure that Illinois State University will remain fiscally strong and resilient as we confront these multiple stressors.

The Board of Trustees believe that the university has taken many steps during the past few years to prepare for anticipated enrollment changes, respond to workforce needs, and anticipate budgetary constraints. These actions include creating new academic programs and significant investment in campus facilities and renovations. Consequently, the Board of Trustees encourages President Tarhule to work diligently to successfully implement and execute the projects the university has already initiated or is in the process of initiating. Additionally, the board expects the new president to also prioritize a campus-wide approach to student success and set into motion initiatives that improve retention and graduation outcomes for all students.

As we embark on the HLC reaccreditation process and the next step of the university's strategic plan process, we feel confident in Illinois State's future and will support university leadership in their work to ensure Illinois State continues to grow in strength and prestige and students continue to have access to an Illinois State University education. Prior to adjournment, I would like to add that at approximately 11:45 a.m., Dr. Tarhule and I will take questions from the media in the Circus Room. There is limited seating, but the session is open to the public and will last no more than 30 minutes. This concludes our business for today. May I have a motion and a second to adjourn the meeting?

Trustee Ebikhumi: So moved.

Trustee Bohn: Trustee Ebikhumi made the motion. Is there a second?

Trustee Jenkins: Second.

Trustee Bohn: Trustee Jenkins second. All those in favor of the motion, please say aye.

Multiple people: Aye.

Trustee Bohn: Opposed? The motion is approved, and we are adjourned at 11:15 a.m. [applause].

[End of recording]