Approved by the Board of Trustees

May 22, 2025

**04**

Board Meeting

May 22, 2025

# AMEND MULTIYEAR CONTRACT WITH

# HEAD VARSITY COACH, FOOTBALL, DIVISION OF INTERCOLLEGIATE ATHLETICS, URBANA

**Action:** Amend Multiyear Contract with Head Varsity Coach, Football, Division of Intercollegiate Athletics

**Funding:** Non-appropriated institutional funds in the Division of Intercollegiate Athletics Operating Budget

On January 26, 2021, the Board of Trustees approved the appointment of Bret Arnold Bielema as head varsity coach, football, Division of Intercollegiate Athletics, Urbana-Champaign. The initial appointment was for a term of approximately six years, beginning on December 19, 2020, and ending on January 31, 2027. The Board also approved Mr. Bielema’s anticipated compensation for each year of the term, including a description of Mr. Bielema’s base salary and an annual increment for television, radio, public relations, and promotional activities. The Board also approved the ability for Mr. Bielema to earn additional performance incentive compensation for achieving specific academic, athletic, and administrative performance goals as determined in advance by the director of the Division of Intercollegiate Athletics. Full standard benefits on the same terms as provided by the university to all professional employees, with contributions and benefit amount based upon the base salary where relevant, were provided to Mr. Bielema. On January 26, 2023, the Board of Trustees approved an amendment to Mr. Bielema’s employment contract, extending the term by two additional years, through January 31, 2029, with contingent contract extensions dependent on performance.

The chancellor, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, and vice president, University of Illinois System, now recommends an amendment to Mr. Bielema’s employment contract, to align the contract years with the university fiscal year of July 1 through June 30, and extend the initial term by two additional years, through June 30, 2031. Mr. Bielema’s compensation schedule through such term is outlined below:

| Contract Year | Base Salary | Additional Compensation | Total Compensation |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Contract Year 1 (July 1, 2025 - June 30, 2026) | $1,000,000 | $6,700,000 | $7,700,000 |
| Contract Year 2 (July 1, 2026 - June 30, 2027) | $1,000,000 | $6,700,000 | $7,700,000 |
| Contract Year 3 (July 1, 2027 - June 30, 2028) | $1,000,000 | $6,700,000 | $7,700,000 |
| Contract Year 4 (July 1, 2028 - June 30, 2029) | $1,000,000 | $6,800,000 | $7,800,000 |
| Contract Year 5 (July 1, 2029 - June 30, 2030) | $1,000,000 | $6,900,000 | $7,900,000 |
| Contract Year 6 (July 1, 2030 - June 30, 2031) | $1,000,000 | $7,000,000 | $8,000,000 |

In addition to the “base” term extension outlined above, Mr. Bielema will have the opportunity for additional one-year contract extensions, contingent on the football team winning six or more regular-season games in a contract year, with the term not extending beyond June 30, 2035. Mr. Bielema’s total compensation during the additional one-year contract extensions will increase beyond the prior year’s amount, by $100,000.

Mr. Bielema’s amended employment agreement will also provide for a $500,000 one-time signing bonus payment (replacing a $500,000 retention bonus that was due at the same time under his prior employment agreement) following the effective date of the amendment and for additional retention incentive compensation payments in each contract year, based on continuous employment by the university through July 1 of each contract year. Mr. Bielema’s retention incentive schedule through the initial term is outlined below:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Retention Incentive Vesting Date | Incentive Amount |
| July 1, 2026 | $700,000 |
| July 1, 2027 | $900,000 |
| July 1, 2028 | $1,000,000 |
| July 1, 2029 | $1,100,000 |
| July 1, 2030 | $1,200,000 |

Mr. Bielema’s retention incentive payment during any additional one-year contract extensions will increase beyond the prior year’s amount by $100,000.

Mr. Bielema’s amended employment agreement will also provide a one-time opportunity to earn a longevity incentive payment of $1,000,000 if Mr. Bielema and the university have not further amended the employment agreement in any material respect as of July 1, 2028. The longevity incentive payment may be accelerated to be earned on July 1, 2027, if the football team participates in a College Football Playoff during the 2025 or 2026 seasons.

Mr. Bielema’s amended employment agreement will retain the provision preventing him from accepting a position at another Big Ten institution during the term of the agreement and will adjust the structure and increase the amount of the liquidated damages that would come owing to the university in the event he resigns his employment prior to the conclusion of his term to accept a position outside of the Big Ten.

Other significant terms and conditions of Mr. Bielema’s original employment agreement will remain in effect or will be appropriately amended to reflect the extension of the term. The employment agreement will also provide for expense reimbursement, transportation for university-related travel, and the university benefits package, in accordance with university policies and practices.The employment agreement will set forth instances in which he may be terminated for cause, including, but not limited to, failure to perform his responsibilities; conduct that brings the university into disrepute; or violations of laws, policies, or governing rules. The amended employment agreement will also continue to provide for the payment of liquidated damages throughout the term of employment in the event Mr. Bielema is terminated without cause, subject to mitigation and offset if he obtains other employment following termination.

Funding is provided from non-appropriated institutional funds in the Division of Intercollegiate Athletics Operating Budget.

The Board action recommended in this item complies in all material respects with applicable State and federal laws, University of Illinois *Statutes*, *The General Rules Concerning University Organization and Procedure*, and Board of Trustees policies and directives.

The president of the University of Illinois System concurs.