MEETING OF THE ACADEMIC AND STUDENT AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES OF THE UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS

September 16, 2026

This meeting of the Academic and Student Affairs Committee of the Board of Trustees of the University of Illinois was held in the Alice Campbell Alumni Center Ballroom, 601 South Lincoln Avenue, Urbana, Illinois, on Wednesday, September 16, 2026, beginning at 3:38 p.m.

Trustee Tami Craig Schilling, chair of the committee, convened the meeting and asked the secretary to call the roll. The following committee members were present: Ms. J. Carolyn Blackwell; Ms. Tami Craig Schilling; Mr. Joseph Gutman;[1] Dr. Bryan S. Traubert; Ms. Gabrielle Stewart, student trustee, Urbana; Ms. Wazeera Shekoni, voting student trustee, Chicago; and Ms. Minnah Saleh, student trustee, Springfield. Mr. Jesse H. Ruiz and Mr. Wilbur C. Milhouse III attended as guests.

Also present were Mr. Howard S. Engle, treasurer; President Timothy L. Killeen; Dr. Nicholas P. Jones, executive vice president and vice president for academic affairs; Dr. Charles L. Isbell Jr., chancellor, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, and vice president, University of Illinois System; Dr. Marie Lynn Miranda, chancellor, University of Illinois Chicago, and vice president, University of Illinois System; Dr. Janet L. Gooch, chancellor, University of Illinois Springfield, and vice president, University of

[1] Mr. Gutman participated via remote videoconference.

Illinois System; Dr. Paul N. Ellinger, comptroller (and vice president/chief financial officer); Ms. Adrienne Nazon, vice president of external relations and communications; Mr. Scott E. Rice, University counsel; and Dr. Jeffrey A. Stein, secretary of the Board of Trustees and of the University.

Ms. Craig Schilling welcomed everyone to the meeting. She reflected on the student experience through the perspective of a family member who recently transferred to the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. Ms. Craig Schilling emphasized the importance of fostering a sense of belonging, engagement, and academic success for students across the University System.

Ms. Craig Schilling asked if there were questions or corrections regarding the minutes of the committee meeting held July 15, 2026. There were none. On motion of Dr. Traubert, seconded by Ms. Blackwell, the minutes were approved. There were no "nay" votes.

REVIEW OF RECOMMENDED BOARD ITEMS FOR THE MEETING OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES OF THE UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS ON SEPTEMBER 17, 2026

Ms. Craig Schilling asked specific individuals in attendance to provide presentations and report on the items that will appear on the Board's agenda at its meeting on September 17, 2026. All proposed agenda items discussed at the meeting are on file with the secretary.

Appointments to the Faculty, Administrative/Professional Staff, and Intercollegiate Athletic Staff

Ms. Craig Schilling asked Dr. Stein to comment on the item recommending appointments to the faculty, administrative/professional staff, and intercollegiate athletic staff (materials on file with the secretary). Dr. Stein explained that the appointments of faculty, administrative and professional staff, and intercollegiate athletic staff recommended in this item have been thoroughly vetted and reviewed at the appropriate levels within the college, department, or unit, and he encouraged committee members to contact him with any questions.

There were no objections to this item being forwarded to the full Board for approval.

PRESENTATION

Scientific and Societal Impact of the Prairie Research Institute

Ms. Craig Schilling asked Dr. Praveen Kumar, executive director, Prairie Research Institute (PRI), to give a presentation on the scientific and societal impact of PRI (materials on file with the secretary). Dr. Kumar provided an overview of PRI and highlighted its historical significance and statewide impact. He stated that PRI consists of five major units: Illinois State Geological Survey, Illinois Natural History Survey, Illinois State Water Survey, Illinois State Archaeological Survey, and Illinois Sustainable Technology Center. Dr. Kumar shared a timeline and emphasized the legacy that the institute brings to the university.

Dr. Kumar reported that PRI employs more than 460 full-time scientists and scholars and supports approximately 850 personnel overall when part-time staff, student workers, and civil service employees are included. He said the institute annually secures State and federal research funding and produces a significant return on investment. Dr. Kumar referenced PRI's history and said it has continued to support a society in transition on a local, state, national, and global scale. He emphasized PRI's mission of applied research focused on addressing contemporary challenges and said that major research areas include climate change, energy transitions, environmental sustainability, carbon capture and sequestration technologies, critical mineral exploration, water resource management, invasive species control, severe weather monitoring, archaeological preservation, environmental contaminants, and community resilience.

Dr. Kumar described PRI's statewide footprint, consisting of approximately 75 facilities and field stations located throughout Illinois. He said these sites support research and engagement activities tailored to local environmental and community needs. Dr. Kumar told the committee that PRI is home to seven Illinois State scientists focusing on biology, hydrology, archaeology, climatology, entomology, pollution prevention, and geology, and that they are often called upon to respond to State and community needs. He reported on research in a wide variety of areas impacting the State and beyond, and he noted that the institute maintains partnerships with State and federal agencies, corporations, universities, community colleges, municipalities, conservation organizations, and numerous other stakeholders.

Dr. Kumar highlighted PRI's experiential learning opportunities and K-12 programming and said the institute engaged more than 51,000 individuals during the previous year. He said PRI also contributes to policymaking through legislative briefings, scientific testimony, and formal studies that inform State decision-making. Looking ahead, Dr. Kumar identified several priorities, including infrastructure renewal, expansion of frontier research, and strengthening partnerships across the University of Illinois System and beyond. He described collaboration as a defining strength of the institute and essential to advancing its mission.

Discussion followed, and Ms. Stewart asked Dr. Kumar to share information about PRI's tribal partnerships. Dr. Kumar stated that the Illinois State Archaeological Survey actively engages with the tribal nations on projects in which tribal organizations serve as lead partners. Mr. Ruiz asked about collaboration across the University of Illinois System, and Dr. Kumar noted some work with the University of Illinois Chicago. Ms. Shekoni asked Dr. Kumar to comment on public engagement activities. Dr. Kumar described PRI's Traveling Science Center and outreach programs conducted at field stations and elsewhere across Illinois, noting that budgetary pressures caused some decline in these programs.

Mr. Milhouse inquired about the budget, and President Killeen discussed PRI's funding structure, explaining that the institute receives support through a dedicated line item within the State appropriation to the University of Illinois System. He highlighted the importance of advocacy efforts to secure funding increases, noting that

PRI provides value to the state through scientific expertise, environmental stewardship, and policy support.

Ms. Craig Schilling asked about the uniqueness of PRI and whether other states housed similar institutions within universities. Dr. Kumar explained that while other states maintain individual scientific surveys, Illinois is distinctive in housing its surveys together under a single institute within a research university. He emphasized the critical role played by the institute's internationally recognized scientists. Ms. Craig Schilling then asked Dr. Kumar to comment on the biggest challenges going forward, and Dr. Kumar said these would include maintaining sufficient financial support to recruit and retain leading scientists, addressing substantial deferred maintenance, and reliance on federal research funding. Ms. Craig Schilling thanked Dr. Kumar for the presentation.

OLD BUSINESS

There was no business presented under this aegis.

NEW BUSINESS

Ms. Craig Schilling asked if there was any new business to discuss, and there was none. She announced that the next meeting of this committee is scheduled for November 11, 2026, in Chicago.

MEETING ADJOURNED

Ms. Craig Schilling requested a motion to adjourn the meeting. On motion of Ms. Blackwell, seconded by Ms. Shekoni, the meeting adjourned at 4:07 p.m. There were no "nay" votes.

Respectfully submitted,

JEFFREY A. STEIN
Secretary

TAMI CRAIG SCHILLING
Chair

EILEEN B. CABLE
Special Assistant to the Secretary