



**MINUTES OF THE TWO-HUNDRED-AND-TWENTY-FIFTH  
MEETING OF THE UNIVERSITY CIVIL SERVICE MERIT BOARD –  
JULY 9, 2024**

State Universities Civil Service System  
(University System) Office  
1717 Philo Road, Suite 24  
Urbana, IL 61802

Northern Illinois University  
116 Altgeld Hall  
Altgeld Hall, Room 203  
DeKalb, IL

Chicago State University  
Cook Administration Building  
9501 South King Drive  
ADM Room 201  
Chicago, IL

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

Governor State University  
1 University Parkway  
Room C3300 (CN Room)  
University Park, IL

University of Illinois at Chicago  
Discovery Partners Institute  
200 S Wacker Drive  
Conference Room 702  
Chicago, IL

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

*Also, via live stream at the following address: <https://multimedia.illinois.gov/sucss/sucss-live.html>*

**Call to Order and Roll Call – John Butler, Vice Chair**

Chair Jones was unable to attend the meeting, so Vice Chair Butler called the meeting to order at 1:17 p.m.

Members present at the University System Office and posted designated sites were: John Butler, Vice Chair, from the Northern Illinois University Board of Trustees; Barb Baurer from the Eastern Illinois University Board of Trustees; Carolyn Blackwell from the University of Illinois Board of Trustees; Jim Kvedaras from the Governors State University Board of Trustees; Kisha Lang from the Western Illinois University Board of Trustees (joined at 1:25 p.m.); J. Todd Phillips from the Northeastern Illinois University; and Jason Quiara from the Chicago State University Board of Trustees.

Members absent were: Julie Annette Jones, Chair, from the Illinois State University Board of Trustees; Ramon Cepeda from the University of Illinois Board of Trustees; Tami Craig Schilling from the University of Illinois Board of Trustees; and John Simmons from the Southern Illinois University Board of Trustees.

Gail Schiesser, Executive Director, Nick Nedeau, Legal Counsel, and Teresa Rademacher, Secretary for the Merit Board, were also present. Various other university employees and State Universities Civil Service System (University System) staff were also in attendance.

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

All members were physically present at a designated meeting site.

**Welcome new Merit Board Member from the Northeastern Illinois University**

Vice Chair Butler welcomed new Merit Board member J. Todd Phillips from the Northeastern Illinois University Board of Trustees and returning Merit Board Member Kisha Lang from the Western Illinois University Board of Trustees.

**Approval of the Agenda for the 225<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Merit Board – Julie Annette Jones, Chair**

Vice Chair Butler asked for a motion to approve the agenda for the meeting. Mr. Kvedaras made a motion to approve the agenda for the 225<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Merit Board. Ms. Baurer seconded Mr. Kvedaras's motion. In accordance with the Merit Board Bylaws, a roll call vote was taken, and the motion was approved with the following vote:

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

**Merit Board Reorganization**

Vice Chair Butler stated that there was one vacancy on the Executive Committee. Vice Chair Butler informed the Merit Board that Ms. Baurer had agreed to serve on the Executive Committee.

Dr. Butler made a motion to elect Ms. Baurer to the Executive Committee. Mr. Quiara seconded Dr. Butler's motion. In accordance with the Merit Board Bylaws, a roll call vote was taken, and the motion was approved with the following vote:

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

**Consideration of the Minutes of the 224<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Merit Board, March 14, 2024**

Ms. Baurer made a motion to approve the Minutes of the 224<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the University Civil Service Merit Board. Ms. Blackwell seconded Ms. Baurer's motion. In accordance with the Merit Board Bylaws, a roll call vote was taken, and the motion was approved with the following vote:

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

**Public Comments**

Vice Chair Butler stated that there had been one request for present Public Comments, Michael Ginsburg from the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC).

Mr. Ginsburg stated that he had been with UIC for 46 years, and from 2015-2023, he had served as UIC's Chief Human Resources Officer. From February 2023 until May 2024, he was the Interim Vice Chancellor for Budget, Human Resources, and Financial Administration, and that he is now serving in the role of Special Advisor to the Chancellor and overseeing the management of the units reporting to the Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs. He stated that prior to serving in his role as UIC HR, he was the Associate Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs and was responsible for all human resources functions in Student Affairs, where he coordinated the conversion of a sizable number of employees from Academic Professional to Civil Service positions in 2011.

He stated that with his long-time experience with the University System, he has had many opportunities to work with and address the predecessors on the Merit Board as well as the current and previous Executive Directors, and he was aware of the board's responsibilities.

He further stated that one key observation he had from his experience is that Merit Board members focus their work on preparation and participation for board meetings, but it is unclear how much time they can spend talking with their campus human resources officers or the hiring departments at their universities. He stated that at the quarterly meetings, the board receives briefing materials from the Executive Director, votes on the items she presents, and listens to the speakers from the HR Directors, Employee Advisory Committee, and others who provide public comments. He said that what the board does not hear at the meetings are comments from the department heads who hire Civil Service employees at the universities or the campus leaders who hear from these department heads about how difficult it is to hire staff.

He stated that the State Universities Civil Service Act was enacted in the 1950s at a time when fair hiring practices were needed to address rampant nepotism. Since that time, universities such as UIC have adopted and administered nepotism policies that govern the hiring of all employees. The Act has had minimal amendments over the last 70 years and consequently, it no longer serves the complex hiring needs of public higher education in Illinois.

He further stated that the rules make hiring more complex than it should be for all the universities. It is even more difficult for UIC, given the large and competitive employment market within the City of Chicago and the entire Chicagoland area, and, even more critically, to hire healthcare workers at their hospital. In Chicago, employees have many other options and often find that they can apply for jobs elsewhere and get interviewed and hired within a week or two, if not days, of applying for the job. At our universities, it is months before we can finish scoring their credentials, develop a register, and determine which candidates are in the top three scores, and by the time we finish the long and tedious civil service hiring process, the most talented applicants have accepted jobs elsewhere. Rush Hospital, Cook County Hospital, and the VA Hospital are all within a few blocks of UIC, Northwestern Hospital is two miles away and several other hospitals are within a short distance. All these competitors can hire a nurse, a physical therapist, or a medical assistant within a week, and UIC is left hoping to convince their failed candidates to wait for an offer to interview at UIC. Healthcare today is nothing like it was in the 1950s, and hiring needs are more specialized and acute. He stated that they need a much nimbler

hiring system to meet our patient care needs. This is crucially important to our mission to serve the most vulnerable members of our community.

He said that he was talking at this meeting to simply request that the board talk with their university leaders.

He said that HR has proposed changes, such as the elimination of residency requirements, revising or eliminating the Rule of 3, the ability to extend extra help appointments when necessary to conduct business and student internships, all of which have been rejected by the University System and/or opposed by the unions which represent many of our employees. He said that leaders have spoken with union representatives and have assured them that the changes suggested are designed to facilitate the hiring of Civil Service staff, not to reduce their numbers. He said he recently spoke with SEIU during their negotiations over a new contract and heard their concerns regarding the substantial number of vacancies in positions governed by their union, and his response to them was that they desperately wanted to fill those positions but could not keep up with the hiring demands because of the rules they have to abide by. He said that the union indicated that they would advocate for any changes that would facilitate the ability to fill these positions.

He stated that with deep respect for all the board does in serving on the Merit Board, they should spend some time hearing directly from their campus leaders regarding the implications of the rules and procedures and to shift their focus from upholding those 70-year-old rules and helping the universities compete on a more timely basis for the quality of staff they need to serve their healthcare, research, student recruitment and retention, and administrative needs. He said they want the universities to be the best in the country if not the world, and that starts with the most talented faculty and staff. Operating with antiquated hiring rules and procedures will not get us there. Do not let us be left behind by our competitors who can utilize innovative hiring practices suitable for the workforce of 2024. He thanked the board for their service and for allowing him the opportunity to address them

### **Report of the Designated Employer Representative Group – Carl Chambers, DER for Southern Illinois University Edwardsville**

Carl Chambers, Director of Human Resources for Southern Illinois University Edwardsville (SIUE), presented comments for the Designated Employer Representative Group. He stated that he started with SIUE on January 2, 2023, and that he was the longest-serving HR Director in the SIU System at one year, seven months, and 8.5 days. In this brief time, he became acutely aware that the onboarding experience at a state university in Illinois presents many challenges and, when viewed properly, potential opportunities.

He stated that as he continues to onboard at SIUE, he wanted to share that his overall experience with the University System had been productive. There had been a spirit of collaboration and a high level of patience, consideration, and mutual respect regarding challenges and pain points, such as turnover in an increasingly volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous (VUCA) job

market. No one is immune to the current VUCA workforce climate, including the University System, which Executive Director Schiesser had shared previously.

SIUE serves the most populous region of downstate Illinois. The campus is in the eastern part of the metropolitan St. Louis statistical area and is home to more than 2.8 million people. Most SIUE students live and work in the industrial and agricultural counties of the Metro-East, where a network of interstate highways provides easy access to the university and the St. Louis region. St. Louis, 20 minutes southwest of the campus, is one of the country's oldest and richest cultural centers, renowned for its symphony, opera, art museums, and conservatories for the arts. It is a center for educational, medical, botanical, biochemical, and business research. SIUE is one of four comprehensive universities among more than 20 higher education institutions in the metropolitan area; because the university is part of a metropolitan area, students and faculty can experience the diversions of ethnic restaurants, retail shopping centers, touring Broadway plays, and professional sports; they can also enjoy the pastoral setting of the campus and nearby state parks, small towns, and historic settlements.

- The University boasts a regional economic impact of more than \$514 million in the 2015 report, a 9% increase since 2010.
- SIUE is the number one producer of bachelor's degrees in the St. Louis Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA).
- For every state dollar spent, SIUE generates \$8.60 of economic impact in the local economy. SIUE also generated more than \$24 million in state and local tax revenues in 2015.
- SIUE is the second largest employer in the Madison-St. Clair County region.
- As a result of SIUE athletics, expenditures in the region nearly doubled from \$249,000 in 2010 to \$497,000 in 2015.
- Alumni State of Residence from Missouri is 17,914 (14.4%), Illinois 68,830 (55.6%), TOTAL 123,796
- 199 (12.4%) of first-year students reside in Missouri, and 97 are junior or senior-year transfer students.
- All Students: Geographic Origins, fall 2023, 12,045, of which 1,833 are non-Illinois Students. 76%, or 1,393, are from Missouri. *Source: SIUE factbook 2024*

He stated that it is an immense concern that 14.4% of SIUE alumni, 12.4% of their current first-year students, and 76% of non-Illinois students from Missouri will graduate from SIUE but will not be eligible to apply for employment with their alma mater for a vast majority of civil service positions that either require current Illinois residency or will require IL residency within 180 days. This, coupled with the fact that the state of Illinois continues to be a top five state where people are fleeing, with an outbound rate of 60.11% in 2022 (115,719), places Illinois state universities at a seismic disadvantage in remaining an employer of choice.

The HR Director Advisory Committee's number one priority remains the revision to the Illinois residency requirement found in 80 IL Administrative Code 250 Section 250.50. Currently, there are thousands of civil service openings at the institutions, and it is not possible to fill them

adequately without reaching beyond the state's borders, especially for bordering states that are near several institutions (UIC, WIU, SIU, etc.)

He further stated other initiatives were the following:

- Rule of 3 Data: It was stated the data provided was insufficient. No further information was provided. The delay in getting qualified applicants the opportunity to interview with our hiring units drastically increases the likelihood that they will be offered and will accept a job elsewhere long before they will ever get referred to our units due to the debilitating Rule of 3.
- There continues to be a delay in the audit process with infrequent status and scheduling updates. Due to this, each cycle, universities are being audited for changes. Several HRDAC members were expected to implement on a data set that they were not notified of the deficiencies until the next audit cycle started. All the universities have internal auditing functions that are expected to uphold the strict standards for professional auditors. Why is it that they are trusted to audit internal controls to manage the billions of dollars flowing in and out of our universities, but they can't audit their human resource practices to comply with University System rules and regulations?
- HRDAC advocates that the University System be expected to review best practices in public higher education employment policies and practices.

He concluded by stating that the HRDAC remains committed to working on priorities that are critical for them to be competitive nationally and internationally for talent that they continually lose to peers based on the employment restrictions they currently operate under.

### **Report of the State Universities Employee Advisory Committee – Jill Odom, Chair**

Ms. Odom, Chair of the Employees Advisory Committee, was unable to attend the meeting, so Nick Nedeau, Legal Counsel for the University System, read her comments.

“She welcomed Mr. Phillips to the Merit Board. You find yourself in a very knowledgeable and involved group of individuals on this board as well as the staff of the State Universities Civil Service System office. We, the State Universities Civil Service Advisory Committee, also known as the Employee Advisory Committee (or EAC), are also a very committed and involved group of individuals from each of the state universities that we represent. Our purpose and goal are to review and advise the Merit Board on matters related to our Civil Service employees, taking into consideration what is best for our constituents, our universities, and the state as a whole. Again, a warm welcome and thank you all for your time and commitment to the Merit Board.

At the Merit Board meeting in March, I shared EAC’s position on the request for the University of Illinois System Office to become a separate place of employment. This matter was of great importance to many constituencies within and outside of the

University of Illinois System and we, EAC, would like to thank you for your thoughtful and diligent consideration of this matter. Your decision to defer this matter until further discussion and consideration of the various ramifications and outcomes that would affect all the parties involved is greatly appreciated. Transparency and collaboration in these matters is what makes our collective bodies work as a team.

EAC's last quarterly meeting was held on April 25<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> at Southern Illinois University School of Medicine in Springfield. At that meeting we installed one new representative: Andrea Hoskinson from the University of Illinois—Chicago, Division of Specialized Care for Children.

Andrea has served as a member of EAC since January of 2019 and we are very pleased that she was elected by her constituents to serve another four-year term.

Kristin Eaton, the Executive Director of Human Resources at SIU-SOM joined our meeting to share various human resource processes and practices that are specific to SIU-SOM. Though their civil service staff are a little unique in their duties compared to other civil service employees, Kristin shared that they are committed to providing the most equitable and respectful environment for their employees as possible. Learning from each of our respective universities helps EAC understand the unique needs and contributions of our civil service employees across the state.

Executive Director Gail Schiesser provided a report to EAC via Noel Rowe and Jonah Jett; two members of her staff who are invaluable not only to Gail and the System Office but to EAC as well. Their knowledge, interest, and collaborative discussions with EAC provide the committee with necessary information and tools to further our goal of providing the best possible information and opinion to the Merit Board on matters related to civil service employees.

Our next quarterly meeting will take place next week on Thursday, July 18<sup>th</sup> and Friday, July 19<sup>th</sup>. We have a full agenda, and I look forward to reporting back to you (in-person) at the next scheduled Merit Board meeting."

### **Consideration of Discharge Proceedings Number EIU-23-1 filed against Hannah Wooldridge by Eastern Illinois University**

Executive Director Schiesser gave an overview of the case, stating Eastern Illinois University filed Written Charges for Discharge against Hannah Wooldridge on December 13, 2023. Ms. Wooldridge was a Food Sanitation Laborer. She was appointed to her position on January 5, 2022. Ms. Wooldridge made a timely request for a discharge hearing.

Eastern Illinois University filed three charges against Ms. Wooldridge:

1. falsifying her timecard, Illinois Ethics Act violation;



2. unauthorized break times, in violation of Article X of the Union Agreement and EIU Internal Policies #19 and #42; and
3. unresolved issues in cooperation of issued progressive discipline and performance improvement initiatives.

There were six incidents of discipline before the Written Charges for Discharge were filed:

- October 17, 2022, Written Counseling was provided regarding performance, reliability/dependability, and break-time concerns.
- November 22, 2022, a Written Reprimand was issued regarding improvement needed regarding excessive absences, unreliability, taking extra breaks, and disappearing from work during work hours.
- February 13, 2022, a 3-day unpaid Disciplinary Suspension was issued regarding failure to improve on areas addressed in the November 22, 2022, written reprimand, concern about a lack of safety at work, and poor judgment.
- March 3, 2023, a 5-day unpaid Disciplinary Suspension was issued regarding insubordination and continued violation of work break policies, reliance on other staff to complete her work assignments, unreliability, and creating a risk to safety.
- April 25, 2023, a Performance Improvement Plan was initiated, to continue through September 25, 2023.
- September 26, 2023, EIU extended the Performance Improvement Plan through November 27, 2023, because of unresolved issues.

The Hearing Record shows the following:

On May 5, 2022, at Ms. Wooldridge's first performance evaluation following her civil service appointment, Ms. Wooldridge's supervisor indicated that Ms. Wooldridge's performance needed improvement in the areas of (a) teamwork and customer service, (b) judgment and organization, and (c) productivity and quality. The April 25, 2023, Performance Improvement Plan was initiated, citing a lack of good judgment, poor organization, attendance and punctuality issues, and poor work quality and productivity. As part of her Performance Improvement Plan, Ms. Wooldridge was required to clock in and out for breaks and meals. At EIU Food Sanitation Laborers are permitted two 15-minute breaks and one 30-minute break per 7½- hour shift. On Ms. Wooldridge's evaluation for the period ending June 30, 2023, her performance was rated as unsatisfactory. The evaluation stated that "[d]ue to disciplinary actions and suspensions," Ms. Wooldridge's overall rating needed improvement. On September 26, 2023, the day after her Performance Improvement Plan had been scheduled to end, the Performance Improvement Plan was extended through November 27, 2023, because of unresolved issues. Jamie Huckstead, the Director of Tower Dining Center at EIU, testified that while the April 25, 2023, Performance

Improvement Plan was in place, Ms. Wooldridge used an improper degreaser on the aluminum door of a walk-in cooler, permanently damaging the finish. Ms. Huckstead stated that "the integrity of the door" was not damaged; the door "just won't look good." Ms. Huckstead further testified that Ms. Wooldridge had failed to order sufficient liquid eggs for dishes on the menu. Ms. Wooldridge also ordered incorrect amounts of taco shells and seasoning and had ordered food items that were not needed. Ms. Wooldridge stopped clocking in and out for breaks and meals after the September 26<sup>th</sup> meeting, where the Performance Improvement Plan was extended. On Friday, October 27, 2023, Ms. Wooldridge was observed taking three extended breaks, totaling 2 hours and 29 minutes. On Wednesday, November 1, 2023, Ms. Wooldridge was observed taking three extended breaks, totaling 2 hours and 52 minutes. On Thursday, November 2, 2023, Ms. Wooldridge was observed taking three extended breaks totaling 1 hour and 48 minutes. The Hearing Officer found that the Employer, Eastern Illinois University, did not sustain its burden of proof on Charge #1, but did sustain its burden of proof regarding Charges 2 and 3.

Mr. Phillips made a motion that the Merit Board go into closed session to discuss the above discharge case. Ms. Blackwell seconded Mr. Phillips's motion. In accordance with the Merit Board Bylaws, a roll call vote was taken, and the motion was approved with the following vote:

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

The Merit Board went into closed session at 1:57 p.m.

The Merit Board returned to open session at 2:03 p.m. Vice Chair Butler stated that the Merit Board needed to adopt a Decision and Order regarding this case.

Mr. Kvedaras made a motion to discharge the employee, Hannah Wooldridge. Ms. Baurer seconded Mr. Kvedaras's motion. In accordance with the Merit Board Bylaws, a roll call vote was taken, and the motion was approved with the following vote:

Mr. Kvedaras .....Aye  
Ms. Lang .....Abstain  
Mr. Phillips .....Aye  
Mr. Quiara .....Aye

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

Therefore, the following Decision and Order of the University Civil Service Merit Board was adopted.

**STATE OF ILLINOIS**

**STATE UNIVERSITIES CIVIL SERVICE SYSTEM**

<b>HANNAH WOOLDRIDGE,</b>	)	<b>BEFORE THE UNIVERSITY CIVIL</b>
	)	<b>SERVICE MERIT BOARD</b>
<b>Employee,</b>	)	
	)	<b>DISCHARGE PROCEEDING</b>
<b>v.</b>	)	
	)	<b>No. EIU-23-1</b>
<b>EASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY,</b>	)	
	)	
<b>Employer.</b>	)	

**DECISION AND ORDER OF THE  
UNIVERSITY CIVIL SERVICE MERIT BOARD**

**PROCEDURAL HISTORY**

Discharge proceedings have been commenced by **EASTERN LLINOIS UNIVERSITY**, employer, against **HANNAH WOOLDRIDGE**, employee, by service of Written Charges for Discharge by UPS overnight mail on December 12, 2023, and the Employee, **HANNAH WOOLDRIDGE**, has filed a timely written request for Hearing. A Hearing was duly convened and held on February 9, 2024, and concluded on February 14, 2024, in conformity with the procedures set forth in Section

250.110(f) of the Illinois Administrative Code (Code) (80 Ill. Adm. Code §250.110(f)). The complete Hearing Record has been certified and placed on file in this cause.

### **FINDINGS**

The University Civil Service Merit Board has examined and reviewed the Hearing Record, as supplemented, which includes the following:

1. Written Charges for Discharge, dated December 13, 2023
2. Suspension Notice Pending Discharge, dated December 13, 2023
3. Employee's Request for Hearing, received on December 28, 2023
4. Amended Written Charges for Discharge, dated January 4, 2024
5. Amended Suspension Notice Pending Discharge, dated January 4, 2024
6. Acknowledgment of Hearing Request, dated January 4, 2024
7. Notice of Appointment as Hearing Officer and Notice of Convening of Hearing to Hearing Officer, dated January 8, 2024
8. Notice of Convening of Hearing to the parties of record, dated January 8, 2024
9. Employee's Motion to Continue Hearing, dated January 8, 2024
10. Amended Notice of Convening of Hearing to Hearing Officer, dated January 19, 2024
11. Amended Notice of Convening of Hearing to the parties of record, dated January 19, 2024
12. Employee's Request for Subpoenas, dated January 22, 2024
13. Subpoena, Huckstead, Jamie, dated January 22, 2024
14. Subpoena, Murphy, Jason, dated January 22, 2024
15. Subpoena, Robertson, Adam, dated January 22, 2024
16. Order Regarding Procedures for Remote Hearing, dated January 23, 2024
17. Employer's Witness List and Exhibit List received February 1, 2024
18. Employee's Witness List received February 2, 2024
19. Employer's Motion to Disqualify Hearing Officer, dated February 1, 2024
20. Order on Motion to Disqualify Hearing Officer, dated February 2, 2024
21. Employee's Witness List received February 4, 2024
22. Employee's Supplemental Witness List received February 5, 2024
23. Employee's Motion to Continue Hearing, dated February 6, 2024
24. Employer's Response to Employee's Motion to Continue Hearing, dated February 6, 2024
25. Order Regarding Employee's Motion to Continue Hearing, dated February 6, 2024
26. Employee's Motion to Reconsider Motion to Continue Hearing, dated February 7, 2024
27. Employer's Response to Employee's Motion to Reconsider Motion to Continue Hearing, dated February 7, 2024
28. Notice of Reconvening of Hearing to Hearing Officer, dated February 12, 2024
29. Notice of Reconvening of Hearing to the parties of record, dated February 12, 2024
30. Transcript February 9, 2024 and February 14, 2024, Hearing

31. Exhibits admitted into Record at Hearing, February 9, 2024, and February 14, 2024
32. Request for Findings of Fact from Hearing Officer, dated March 14, 2024
33. Findings of Fact rendered by Hearing Officer, dated March 26, 2024

Now being fully advised of the matters contained in the Hearing Record, as supplemented, and based solely on the matters contained in the Hearing Record, as supplemented, the University Civil Service Merit Board makes the following jurisdictional and factual findings and issues the following Decision and Order:

1. That this discharge proceeding has been commenced and conducted in compliance with Section 250.110(f) of the Code and all applicable State and Federal Laws and that the University Civil Service Merit Board has jurisdiction of the parties and subject matter thereof.
2. That the Hearing Record, as supplemented, supports and sustains one or more of the following charges of the employer, **EASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY**, against the employee, **HANNAH WOOLDRIDGE**, and establishes just cause for discharge, as follows:
  - Falsifying her timecard – Illinois Ethics Acts Violation
  - Unauthorized break times in violation of Article X-Union Agreement and EIU Internal Policies #19 & #42
  - Unresolved issues in cooperation of issued progressive discipline & performance improvement initiatives

#### **DECISION AND ORDER**

#### **WHEREFORE, IT IS HEREBY ORDERED:**

1. The Findings of Fact of the Hearing Officer, attached hereto, are approved and certified to the employer, **EASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY**, to the extent not inconsistent with the findings made herein.

2. The employee, **HANNAH WOOLDRIDGE**, is hereby separated from the service of her employer, **EASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY**, and the effective date of her discharge shall be July 9, 2024.
3. This Order is FINAL and is subject to the Administrative Review Law. Section 250 of Title 80 of the Illinois Administrative Code does not authorize the Merit Board to hear any motion or request for reconsideration.
4. The names of the Hearing Officer and each of the parties is as follows:

**Hearing Officer**

Ms. Lorna Geiler  
Attorney at Law

**Parties of Record**

Mr. Austin Hill  
Attorney at Law

Mr. Todd Reardon  
Attorney at Law

Ms. Hannah Wooldridge

**DATED AND ENTERED** this 9<sup>th</sup> day of July, 2024.

**UNIVERSITY CIVIL SERVICE MERIT BOARD**

By: */s/ John Butler*

John Butler, Vice Chair  
University Civil Service Merit Board

ATTEST:

*/s/ Teresa Rademacher*

Teresa Rademacher  
Secretary for the Merit Board

**Consideration of proposed rulemaking to Section 250.5 of the Illinois Administrative Code (Code) adding/editing definitions, Section 250.20 of the Code regarding updates to the Designated Employer Representative section and the required forms, and Section 250.110 of the Code updating several matters**

Executive Director Schiesser stated the University System was proposing several changes to the rules to provide clarification and specificity, along with adding language allowing the University System to put standing orders in place for discharge matters. She further outlined the other changes. This request is to submit these changes to the Joint Committee on Administrative Rules (JCAR) for the First Notice Period.

Mr. Baurer made a motion to submit the proposed rule changes to JCAR for the First Notice Period. Mr. Kvedaras seconded Mr. Baurer’s motion. In accordance with the Merit Board Bylaws, a roll call vote was taken, and the motion was approved with the following vote:

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

**Consideration to increase the fee for a Hearing Officer for service on Discharge/Demotion Hearings**

Executive Director Schiesser stated the Hearing Officer fee has not been increased in the last several years. The current fee is \$1,000 per day, with a maximum of \$3,000 per hearing, for hearings held. This fee includes all costs associated with the preparation, the day or days of the hearing, and the preparation of the Findings of Fact. She stated that the University System was asking to increase the fee to \$1,100 per day, with a maximum of \$3,300 per hearing. In instances where a hearing is canceled within five (5) business days prior to the scheduled hearing date, the University System currently pays the hearing officer \$650 for a loss of opportunity fee and are asking for an increase to \$700.

Mr. Kvedaras made a motion to increase the Hearing Officer fees effective July 1, 2024, to \$1,100 and \$700. Ms. Lang seconded Mr. Kvedaras' motion. In accordance with the Merit Board Bylaws, a roll call vote was taken, and the motion was approved with the following vote:

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

## **Governance, Risk, and Compliance Audit Program review of recent activities – Gail Schiesser**

Executive Director Schiesser commented that there has been significant progress on the audit backlog. The University System completed and delivered three final audit reports to the University of Illinois at Chicago, Northern Illinois University, and Chicago State University. The staff has also delivered draft reports, met with employers, and received, reviewed, and incorporated administrative responses. She further stated that the staff was finalizing two additional reports for the Illinois Community College Board and the Division of Specialized Care for Children. These reports are anticipated to be delivered within the next two weeks. Two additional reports were delivered and have administrative responses, and staff are also reviewing reports for Illinois State University and Governors State University. These reports are anticipated to be delivered by the end of July. Also, a draft report has been delivered to the Illinois Board of Higher Education, and the administrative review is not due until July 31, and the final report will be delivered in August.

The University System is also working on three additional draft reports for Eastern Illinois University, Western Illinois University, and the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. These reports should be completed within the next three weeks.

The University system is also completing the review of audit materials for the University of Illinois Springfield and anticipates this draft report to be ready within the next seven weeks.

The University System is also creating the next audit schedule and is reviewing and revising the audit timeframe to adjust for the recent backlog, so our audit timeframe does not impair the employers.

## **Report of the Executive Director – Gail Schiesser**

Executive Director Schiesser stated that the University System has had three staff changes since the last Merit Board meeting. Jonah Jett resigned in May from the Compliance Services Division, Brandon Wood was hired on May 1<sup>st</sup> as a Human Resource Representative in the Compliance Services Division, and Nick Nedeau was hired as Legal Counsel on July 1<sup>st</sup>.

The University System also notified the University of Illinois at Chicago in June as a reminder that UIC John Marshall School of Law as a separate place of employment would be dissolved and absorbed into the greater University of Illinois at Chicago campus along with current pay, seniority, and retreat rights. This dissolution was agreed upon in 2019 when they acquired John Marshall Law School and was approved as a separate place of employment for five years.

Executive Director Schiesser informed the Merit Board that the University System was currently being audited by the Auditor General and that the agency is continuing to answer questions and provide the requested materials to date.



Executive Director Schiesser informed the Merit Board that for FY24, there is approximately \$126,000 unexpended, and that is primarily from unspent payroll, such as the Legal Counsel and the two vacant positions from August 2023. She also said that the Governor's budget recommendation was adopted in the amount of \$1,444,500 for FY25.

Noel Rowe provided an update for Classification, Examination, and Compensation Division, stating that revising classifications and examinations requires careful analysis and research into industry standards, proven practices, current uses of classification, and current laws and regulations. In addition, the division performs many other tasks for example within this year, we have also rescored examinations and approved compensatory qualification requests, specialty factor requests, intern program requests, extra help extensions, contract appointments, and student appointments, along with conducting training sessions for employers.

### **Report of Legal Counsel – Nick Nedeau**

Nick Nedeau, new Legal Counsel for the University system, introduced himself and provided an overview of his background. Mr. Nedeau stated that there are currently two administrative review matters pending:

#### **Vincent Bradford**

Vincent Bradford, a former employee at the University of Illinois Chicago (UIC), has filed a Complaint for Administrative Review in the Circuit Court of Cook County, Illinois, requesting a review of the Merit Board's December 10, 2021, decision to discharge him. The Illinois Attorney General's Office represents the Merit Board and the System Office. Mr. Bradford prepared and served a Second Amended Complaint. It was filed after the deadline set by the Court. The Attorney General's Office filed a Motion to Dismiss. The Motion for dismissal was granted. Bradford has filed a Notice of Appeal. The matter is fully briefed. We are waiting for a decision.

#### **Christopher Bean**

Christopher Bean, a former University of Illinois at Chicago employee, filed a "Charge Against a Labor Organization" with the Illinois Educational Labor Relations Board (IELRB). Mr. Bean alleged a violation of the Illinois Educational Labor Relations Act (IELRA), 115 ILCS 5, and identified the agency as a "Labor Organization." The Illinois Attorney General's office is representing the agency in that matter. Following a recommendation by the Executive Director of the IELRB, the IELRB dismissed the charge on February 4, 2022. On May 27, 2022, Mr. Bean filed an appeal in the Appellate Court to overturn the IELRB dismissal. The Assistant Attorney General has filed a motion to dismiss. This Motion was denied, and the case is proceeding against our agency. The Court is waiting for Mr. Bean to file his brief based on the merits. The case is still pending.

### **Other Items as presented**

Vice Chair Butler asked if the board had any other matters to discuss. There being none, Ms. Blackwell made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Ms. Lang seconded Ms. Blackwell’s motion. In accordance with the Merit Board Bylaws, a roll call vote was taken, and the motion was approved with the following vote:

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

The meeting adjourned at 2:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

*/s/ Teresa Rademacher*

Teresa Rademacher  
Secretary for the Merit Board

APPROVED:

*/s/ John Butler*

John Butler, Chair  
University Civil Service Merit Board

October 15, 2024

Date