



**MINUTES OF THE TWO-HUNDRED-AND-TWENTY-NINETH
MEETING OF THE UNIVERSITY CIVIL SERVICE MERIT BOARD –
DECEMBER 09, 2025**

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

Northern Illinois University
Altgeld Hall, Room 231
DeKalb, IL

Chicago State University
Gwendolyn Brooks Library
Conference Room 352
9501 South King Drive
Chicago, IL

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

Governors State University
1 University Parkway
Room C2315
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

University of Illinois at Springfield
One University Plaza
Human Resource Building (HRB) Room #30
Springfield, IL

Call to Order and Roll Call – John Butler, Chair

Chair Butler called the meeting to order at 1:04 pm.

Members present at the State Universities Civil Service System (University System) and posted designated sites were: John Butler, Chair, from the Northern Illinois University Board of Trustees; Barb Baurer from the Eastern Illinois University Board of Trustees; Tami Craig Schilling from the University of Illinois Board of Trustees (joined at 1:30 pm); Jim Kvedaras from the Governors State University Board of Trustees; Robert Navarro from the Illinois State University Board of Trustees; J. Todd Phillips from the Northeastern Illinois University Board of Trustees; Jason Quiara from the Chicago State University Board of Trustees, and John Simmons from the Southern Illinois University Board of Trustees.

Members absent were Carolyn Blackwell from the University of Illinois Board of Trustees; Ramon Cepeda from the University of Illinois Board of Trustees; and Kisha Lang from the Western Illinois University Board of Trustees.

Gail Schiesser, Executive Director; Maggie Miller, Legal Counsel; and Teresa Rademacher, Secretary for the Merit Board, were also present. Various other university employees and University System staff were also in attendance.

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

Chair Butler stated that Ms. Craig Schilling and Ms. Quiara were unable to participate at one of the meeting locations due to prior work commitments. As required by the Open Meetings Act, the board needed to take action to allow them to participate at non-public sites.

Mr. Kvedaras made a motion to approve both Ms. Craig Schilling and Ms. Quiara to participate in the meeting at a non-public site due to work commitments. 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. KvedarasAye
Dr. LangAbsent
Dr. Navarro.....Aye
Mr. PhillipsAye
Mr. Simmons.....Aye
Ms. Baurer.....Aye
Ms. BlackwellAbsent
Chair ButlerAye
Mr. Cepeda.....Absent

Welcome new Merit Board member from Illinois State University

Chair Butler welcomed Dr. Navarro to the Merit Board.

Approval of the Agenda for the 229th Meeting of the Merit Board – John Butler, Chair

Chair Butler asked for a motion to approve the agenda for the December 9, 2025, meeting. Mr. Simmons made a motion to approve the agenda for the 229th 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. SimmonsAye
Ms. Baurer.....Aye
Ms. BlackwellAbsent
Chair ButlerAye
Mr. Cepeda.....Absent
Ms. Craig SchillingAye
Mr. KvedarasAye
Dr. LangAbsent
Dr. Navarro.....Aye
Mr. PhillipsAye
Mr. Quiara.....Aye

Consideration of the Minutes of the 228th Meeting of the Merit Board, August 19, 2025

Chair Butler asked for action to approve or take action regarding the minutes of the August 19, 2025, meeting. Mr. Simmons made a motion to approve the Minutes of the 228th Meeting of the University Civil Service Merit Board. Ms. Baurer seconded Ms. 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
Ms. Baurer.....Aye
Ms. BlackwellAbsent
Chair ButlerAye
Mr. Cepeda.....Absent
Ms. Craig SchillingAye
Mr. KvedarasAye
Dr. Navarro.....Aye
Dr. LangAbsent
Mr. PhillipsAye
Mr. Quiara.....Aye

Consideration of the Closed Minutes of the 226th Meeting of the Merit Board, October 15, 2024

Chair Butler asked for action to approve or take action regarding the closed minutes from the October 15, 2024, meeting. Mr. Simmons made a motion to approve the Closed Minutes of the 226th Meeting of the University Civil Service Merit Board. Mr. Quiara seconded Ms. 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
Ms. Baurer.....Aye
Ms. BlackwellAbsent
Chair ButlerAye
Mr. Cepeda.....Absent
Ms. Craig SchillingAye
Mr. KvedarasAye
Dr. Navarro.....Aye
Dr. LangAbsent
Mr. PhillipsAye
Mr. Quiara.....Aye

Consideration of the Closed Minutes of the 227th Meeting of the Merit Board, April 22, 2025

Chair Butler asked for action to approve or take action regarding the closed minutes of the April 22, 2025, meeting. Mr. Simmons made a motion to approve the Closed Minutes of the 227th

Meeting of the University Civil Service Merit Board. Ms. Baurer seconded Ms. 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
Ms. Baurer.....Aye
Ms. BlackwellAbsent
Chair ButlerAye
Mr. Cepeda.....Absent
Ms. Craig SchillingAye
Mr. KvedarasAye
Dr. Navarro.....Aye
Dr. LangAbsent
Mr. PhillipsAye
Mr. Quiara.....Aye

Consideration of the Closed Minutes of the 228th Meeting of the Merit Board, August 19, 2025

Chair Butler asked for action to approve or take action regarding the closed minutes of the August 19, 2025, meeting. Mr. Simmons made a motion to approve the Closed Minutes of the 228th Meeting of the University Civil Service Merit Board. Ms. Baurer seconded Ms. 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
Ms. Baurer.....Aye
Ms. BlackwellAbsent
Chair ButlerAye
Mr. Cepeda.....Absent
Ms. Craig SchillingAye
Mr. KvedarasAye
Dr. Navarro.....Aye
Dr. LangAbsent
Mr. PhillipsAye
Mr. Quiara.....Aye

Consideration to destroy the recordings of Closed Session Minutes

Chair Butler asked for action to approve or take action regarding the destruction of recordings of several closed meetings of the Merit Board. Mr. Simmons made a motion to approve the destruction of recordings of the Closed meetings of the Merit Board of the following dates: December 17, 2019, January 17, 2020, May 13, 2021, December 9, 2021, August 11, 2022, March 16, 2023, and November 30, 2023. Mr. Kvedaras seconded Ms. 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
 Ms. Baurer.....Aye
 Ms. BlackwellAbsent
 Chair ButlerAye
 Mr. Cepeda.....Absent
 Ms. Craig SchillingAye
 Mr. KvedarasAye
 Dr. Navarro.....Aye
 Dr. LangAbsent
 Mr. PhillipsAye
 Mr. Quiara.....Aye

Mr. Kvedaras requested a discussion regarding the typical retention period for recordings of closed minutes and the process for their dismissal in a group. Ms. Miller responded that the Open Meetings Act provides that recordings may be destroyed 18 months after the meeting, provided the public body has approved the minutes of the closed session and approved the destruction of the recordings. She further stated that since the agency must wait at least 18 months from the meeting itself, it's common for the agency to address them in batches. A party to a discharge has 35 days after the Merit Board takes action to initiate any appeal, so the destruction of recordings of closed sessions should occur long after any need for the recordings exists.

Public Comments

Chair Butler stated that there were four requests to make public comments. He stated that the first two requests come from parties to the discharge matter on agenda for this meeting, relating to Agenda Items 13, 14, and 15. At this time, Article 6, Section 6, Number 4 of Merit Board Bylaws permits the Merit Board to ask speakers the topics they wish to address, so that the board may permit public participation immediately before discussing those topics. Regarding our first speaker, Paul Burmeister, Legal Counsel for Northeastern Illinois University (NEIU), a motion to make Oral Arguments is on the agenda, and he would only wish to make a public comment if that motion is denied.

Chair Butler asked Mr. Burmeister whether he would be amenable to a motion to move any public comment he offered, if his motion to make oral arguments were denied, to immediately follow the board's determination on his motion regarding Agenda Item 13. Mr. Burmeister responded that if his motion to make Oral Arguments was denied, he would hold off until the public comment on Agenda Item 13.

Mr. Simmons made a motion to approve Mr. Burmeister's public comment on Agenda Item 13 if his motion to make Oral Arguments is denied. Mr. Kvedaras seconded Ms. 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
 Ms. Baurer.....Aye
 Ms. BlackwellAbsent
 Chair ButlerAye

Mr. Cepeda.....Absent
Ms. Craig SchillingAye
Mr. KvedarasAye
Dr. Navarro.....Aye
Dr. LangAbsent
Mr. PhillipsAye
Mr. Quiara.....Aye

Chair Butler asked Ms. Minelli if she would like to make public comments now or before Agenda Item 14. Ms. Minelli stated that she would wait to provide public comments on Agenda Item 14.

Mr. Simmons made a motion to approve Ms. Minelli's public comment on Agenda Item 14. Ms. Craig Schilling seconded Ms. 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
Ms. Baurer.....Aye
Ms. BlackwellAbsent
Chair ButlerAye
Mr. Cepeda.....Absent
Ms. Craig SchillingAye
Mr. KvedarasAye
Dr. Navarro.....Aye
Dr. LangAbsent
Mr. PhillipsAye
Mr. Quiara.....Aye

Chair Butler stated that the next person to present public comments was Dean Claire Stewart from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Dean Stewart stated that the 144 civil service staff who work in the library at the university are critical to the success of their students and faculty, as well as to the stewardship of the library collection, which is one of the largest and most unique in the world, the product of over a century of investment by the citizens of our state. She stated that they cannot fulfill their library mission without the support of civil service employees. The designated employer representatives have been advocating for change so far without success, and she hoped to provide some additional context and support for their requests.

The University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign library employs a diverse range of civil service staff, including programmers, entry-level assistants, and HR specialists. However, the current credential assessment processes often misalign with job requirements, awarding points for degrees that are irrelevant to the position. This creates barriers for qualified candidates, particularly those from historically marginalized communities, and it limits economic mobility for those without college degrees. For example, we do not require PhD holders or even master's degrees in library science for our entry-level cataloging positions or overnight service roles; however, our pools are dominated by them. She strongly urges the board to consider changes

that would allow more granular, role-specific credential evaluations so they can identify individuals with the competencies they are seeking.

She stated that if a position does not require anything beyond a high school diploma or GED, additional points for advanced degrees should not effectively disqualify those applicants from the job, and this change is essential to ensure fair access and to recognize the competencies that truly matter for success in these roles.

The Rule of Three further restricts the university's ability to hire effectively by limiting visibility into applicant pools. The university is required to interview an unreasonably small number of applicants who are not well-suited to their positions or the pay they command. Expanding the pool beyond three and allowing the hiring unit and the DER to work together to review all candidate applications and cover letters at all position levels would be a positive and meaningful change.

She stated that the board has heard from others in the past urging a change to the residency requirement, and she wants to add her voice. While most of the university's library roles require an on-site presence, some do not. For positions that can be performed remotely, flexibility is critical to attract top talent in areas such as digital systems, information access, and AI innovation.

Finally, she stated that they are seeking a more open and collaborative approach to revising the library series class specifications. With her colleagues in the Council of Deans of State University Libraries in Illinois, she seeks dialogue and more direct engagement with the University System team as we consider such revisions. She stated that they are very concerned about having very little information about the revision work underway since September 2024. The work they do in our libraries is unique within our university environments and requires a well-structured civil service series that is progressive and distinct from other types of work, yet also flexible enough to allow us to customize openings based on contemporary needs. She further stated that their library is well-positioned to provide intellectual and ethical leadership on pressing contemporary issues. Responsible use of generative AI and protecting broad access to information are two that come immediately to her mind, and she is eager to engage in dialogue with the University System, bringing her deep expertise into direct conversation with it.

Chair Butler asked Chief Aaron Woodruff, Chief of Police from Illinois State University, to present public comments. Chief Woodruff provided an update on their understanding of the current status of the police series exam process. In October, the Chiefs and HR Directors were told the University System had completed the research and wanted separate meetings with each school. The Chiefs requested a single meeting with all stakeholders, as they did in May 2025, to promote consistency and avoid confusion from multiple individual meetings. A joint discussion would have let everyone hear the same information, ask questions, and understand the next steps together, saving time and effort for all involved. Despite multiple requests, they were only offered individual meetings. Many saw this as an attempt by the Executive Director to divide them further, eroding any trust between the Chiefs and the University System. Rather than continue to push back, the Chiefs agreed to meet with the Executive Director one-on-one, then regrouped as a team to ensure they had all received the same information. These multiple meetings not only increased the University System's workload but also added to their own.

Chief Woodruff said that Ms. Borman's research covered campus police roles, the structure of police departments, and the advantages and disadvantages of the three exam options. He further stated that when they specifically asked about using credentials assessment, Ms. Borman dismissed it as having any benefits. Yet the fact is that there are, at a minimum, time and cost savings that could have been acknowledged.

More troubling, Ms. Borman claimed that to validate an exam, you must hire candidates who fail it. She referred to the police management textbook without citing a page or chapter number. Chief Woodruff challenged the absurdity of this, recalling that in the last testing revision conducted by IO Solutions, the exam was validated by having current officers and supervisors take it. Overall, her answers and slides cast doubt on the quality and credibility of their research, which seemed only to support their chosen outcome. Speaking as someone with almost three decades of law enforcement experience, including 15 years as Chief of Police with both undergraduate and graduate degrees in criminal justice, other chiefs found their approach dismissive.

He stated that all the Police Chiefs asked was that the credentials assessment be properly considered as an innovative way to streamline the hiring process, which clearly wasn't. After the individual meetings, the chiefs met to compare notes, since the Executive Director did not allow PowerPoint slides to be shared or recordings. He said they sent a memo summarizing their shared understanding to the Executive Director via the University of Illinois at Chicago Police Chief Booker on November 19, 2025. Key Points included: a new exam that will eliminate the external oral board requirement, be electronic rather than handwritten, and will not be administered by the University System, with funding provided by the University System. The Executive Director's office will draft a formal RFP or RFI to select a vendor for a standardized exam covering Police Officers, Police Corporals, Police Sergeants, and Police Telecommunicators, and will involve the state university chiefs in the procurement evaluation. Current credentials assessments for Police Lieutenants, Police Captains, and Deputy Police Chiefs will remain unchanged, and the Police Corporal classification will not be removed. The chiefs agree that if these key points are accurate, they represent an acceptable compromise.

In their memo, they specifically request a confirmation or clarification to ensure alignment as they move forward. To date, they have not yet received any response, and he respectfully urges the Executive Director to commit to working collaboratively and to honor the commitments she made during their discussions.

Report of the Designated Employer Representative Group – Gladys Lopez, DER for the University of Illinois at Chicago

Gladys Lopez, Associate Vice Chancellor for Human Resources and the Designated Employer Representative (DER) for the University of Illinois at Chicago, joined the university in June 2024. At the April 22 meeting, her colleague, Jami Painter, Senior Associate Vice President and CHRO for the U of I System, shared that, even after over 20 years of genuine collaborative effort, they have yet to implement the competitive changes our recruitment and employment framework needs. At the August 19, 2025, meeting, John Acardo, CHRO and DER for Northern Illinois University, echoed a similar message. It is understandably discouraging that despite sincere

intentions and considerable effort, progress on long-standing and urgently needed changes remains limited. These delays are no longer operational inconveniences; they are strategic risks. Continued inaction threatens their ability to function effectively as an institution of higher learning, a healthcare provider, and a state employer. Outdated and rigid legacy processes continue to restrict our operational capacity, undermine competitiveness, and slow our response to rapidly evolving external pressures.

The changes that the DER Group is requesting are targeted, reasonable, and essential. In advance of today's meeting, clear evidence was provided demonstrating how generational shifts and rapid technological advancements have fundamentally reshaped workforce expectations, and she hoped the board had reviewed that information, as these realities must guide our planning and decision-making. For context, in 2015, the U of I System employed five generations. Millennials make up less than 33 percent of our workforce, while baby boomers accounted for nearly 30 percent. In 2025, we still span five generations, but millennials and Gen Z now comprise nearly 60 percent of our workforce, while baby boomers have fallen below 10 percent. Within the next five years, Gen Alpha, fully immersed in digital technology, will begin entering the labor market. Traditional processes, such as scoring and the use of registers, no longer resonate with most of today's workforce and will hold even less relevance for the next generation, who will expect organizations to be modern, innovative, and responsive. According to the Society for Human Resources Management's talent benchmarking, candidates view slow and outdated hiring practices as indicators of institutional inefficiency, and outdated hiring systems erode organizational credibility and reduce applicant pools.

The United States Office of Personnel Management data shows that public sector agencies with legacy processes routinely lose talent before an offer can be made. Technological advancements have transformed how people work, communicate, and engage, yet many of the regulations, processes, and procedures governing our operations were written decades ago, even before computers, the internet, digital records, or modern HR systems existed. These frameworks no longer align with modern expectations or current societal realities.

At the August 19, 2025, board meeting, Dr. Nick Jones, Executive Vice President and Vice President of Academic Affairs for the U of I System, noted that the long-predicted demographic shift will reshape our industry. Declining enrollment, beginning in the fall of 2026, will reduce the supply of college graduates and, consequently, qualified talent for years to come. This shift will affect not only universities but the broader labor market and our economy.

By 2039, the United States will have 650,000 fewer 18-year-olds per year than it does today, and the Bureau of Labor Statistics projects a significant slowdown in labor force growth, which will soon approach historic lows. These demographic realities, combined with shifting generational expectations, rapid technological advancements, and a constrained labor market, necessitate immediate action. She further stated that they must modernize our processes, empower subject-matter experts to act with agility, and prepare for the workforce realities already unfolding.

Our proposals should not be viewed simply as new and improved; they should be seen as innovative and transformative. They are necessitated by the fact that it is 2025, and our strategic and workforce planning must look toward 2030 and beyond. The recommendations do not

diminish or compromise civil service protections. To be clear, compliance remains essential to accountability and public trust; however, it should enable progress rather than constrain it. We appreciate your willingness to engage and the consideration you have given to our requests. However, decades of minimal change reveal a persistent gap between expressed willingness and the actual implementation of needed modern solutions. Awareness, consideration, and discussion without action leave the problem intact. Two truths must guide us moving forward. One, compliance cannot come at the expense of operational effectiveness, and two, we cannot remain so anchored to processes designed 70 years ago while today's needs accelerate around us.

Given the seriousness of these issues and the alignment expressed by numerous public speakers, leaders, executives, as well as other DERs, the urgency is irrefutable. Our window for action continues to narrow; this is a pivotal moment. We must stop looking in the rearview mirror and move decisively toward modern, effective, and responsive processes that allow DERs to support leaders in advancing our institution's strategic priorities. The issues before us are clear, urgent, and directly within our line of sight. Our actions must reflect timely stewardship rather than hesitation in the face of known challenges.

Therefore, she respectfully requests the board's guidance on any additional information they may need, as well as their commitment to advancing the implementation of critical changes. In that spirit, she also requested full transparency in the sharing of documents, information, or research that are guiding the decisions and processes they are expected to follow.

Mr. Phillips asked who sets the rules, guidelines, and regulations that Ms. Lopez was referring to. The Executive Director stated that the Act and Rule changes all of those go first through the University System, then to the Merit Board for approval and presentation to JCAR. The employers certainly have an opinion, and theirs differs from the University System's, that the rules are outdated and dysfunctional. She stated that we have already discussed on several occasions that a significant portion of what delays hiring is not due to civil service rules but rather to university policies, over which the University System has no control. That absolutely belongs to the university. The University System is currently working on several proposals, and they will first be presented to the universities and then to the Merit Board in the coming months.

Chair Butler added that a number of the suggested modernization proposals embedded in Ms. Lopez's comments and the Dean's prior comments would require legislative change. There is a good record of legislative proposals not advancing through the legislature due to significant opposition, including the most recent effort to change the residency requirement, which essentially stalled despite substantial support. Mr. Phillips' question about jurisdiction is really relevant here. As a board, we have heard repeated speeches from individuals who are very critical of the statute's age and the Merit Board's reluctance to make changes, given the Merit Board's limited authority to do so. Therefore, I would encourage you and your colleagues to draw a distinction between the changes that the board can make and those that would require the rules to go through JCAR, which is subject to the public policy process.

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

Ms. Odom outlined the Employee Advisory Committee’s (EAC) efforts to strengthen engagement with civil service employees, including the development of a statewide survey on workplace priorities, staffing impacts, awareness of civil service structures, and transparency. She explained the survey's distribution, the expected timeline for data compilation, and the committee's intention to use the results to guide its 2026 work, while continuing efforts on issues such as open and continuous testing, extra help, compensation, and register maintenance. Ms. Odom concluded her report by outlining its upcoming 2026 annual meeting, planned elections, and continued focus on issues such as employee protection, communication with the University System, and collaborative problem-solving.

Consideration of NEIU's Motion for Permission to make Oral Argument to the Merit Board or, alternatively, speak in public comments, filed on October 22, 2025

Chair Butler asked for action on either approving or taking another action regarding the Motion for NEIU to present Oral Arguments regarding Discharge Proceeding No. NEIU-25-3, Northeastern Illinois University vs. Laura Minelli. Mr. Simmons made a motion to approve NEIU's Motion for Permission to make Oral Arguments to the Merit Board. Ms. Baurer seconded Ms. 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
- Ms. Baurer.....Aye
- Ms. BlackwellAbsent
- Chair ButlerAye
- Mr. Cepeda.....Absent
- Ms. Craig SchillingAye
- Mr. KvedarasAye
- Dr. Navarro.....Aye
- Dr. LangAbsent
- Mr. PhillipsAye
- Mr. Quiara.....Aye

Paul Burmeister, Legal Counsel for Northeastern Illinois University, provided Oral Arguments to the Merit Board on two issues. The first one is related to a motion, specifically an emergency motion filed by the employee, Ms. Minelli, to provide some background information pursuant to the record in this case, as provided to the parties by the University System. This was motion number 34 or 35, filed by Ms. Minelli during the proceedings. And this one was filed 22 minutes before the hearing on her discharge began. The hearing officer in this case denied the request to postpone the hearing. However, in this instance, the motion is a very bare-bones motion filed by the employee regarding four separate issues. Also, some of these issues filed in those 34 or 35 motions were addressed by the Executive Director and dismissed. And for these reasons, NEIU respectfully requests that the Merit Board deny Ms. Minelli's emergency motion in this matter. The first reason for her request for dismissal is related to retaliation during an active EEOC proceeding.

Mr. Burmeister stated that there were no facts regarding the active EEOC proceedings at that time. He was aware that an EEOC charge had been filed, but he was not handling it and didn't know whether it was active. However, that was also part of a July 11, 2025, motion filed by Ms. Minelli, which was dismissed by the Executive Director and the civil service on July 22, 2025. So, the NEIU believes that Ms. Minelli is essentially seeking two bites at the same apple; that the matter regarding the EEOC proceedings has been previously decided and dismissed by the civil service. Regardless, it's not relevant. There is no regulation or statute within the civil service code that would apply, and Ms. Minelli pleads none in her motion regarding retaliation under the EEOC. Also, if she has such a claim of retaliation, it's not germane to her matter before the Merit Board or the University System. Ms. Minelli has another forum; she can file a retaliation claim either through NEIU's policies, the EEOC, or the Illinois Department of Human Rights. Those were the appropriate places for her allegations of retaliation in this matter, in violation of the EEOC or other provisions she's claiming here.

With regards to her second allegation that was FMLA during interference with her FMLA, the claim here is a part of the FMLA, which she is alleging that she is caring for a dependent, which would be her mother in this case, who is also a veteran of the U.S. Army. He stated that he had mentioned earlier, this was part of the July 11, 2025, motion. And then she again pled this as another motion to the University System on July 16, 2025, which was again dismissed by the Executive Director, and he thought it was on July 22, 2025. He further stated that we have the matter that was considered and dismissed by the Executive Director, as happened with the first matter, and that he was aware of this as well, since it had previously been argued.

He stated that, for many of these motions, NEIU didn't file a response. But for this one, they did. It was NEIU's understanding that the statute referenced in this case applied only to active-duty service members and their care. In this case, Ms. Minelli pleaded that the individual is a retired service member. Fortunately, or unfortunately, as the case may be, depending on how you look at this, the statute cited here wouldn't apply in the first place. Secondly, even if Ms. Minelli would like to proceed under an FMLA interference claim, to my understanding and review of the civil service statutes and regulations, FMLA is not something considered under the law regarding civil service. She can file an FMLA claim in either state or federal court. For these reasons, it's inappropriate to have this before the Merit Board. NEIU respectfully requests that Ms. Minelli's request for dismissal of this claim for FMLA interference also be dismissed.

The third is the Illinois Caregiver Protection Law, a new statute effective January 1, 2025. NEIU didn't have any opportunity to respond to this because, again, it was filed 22 minutes before the hearing started. After the hearing's concluded, there are no additional items for which NEIU or Ms. Minelli could place in the record. However, the Illinois Caregiver Protection Law in the Act has no standing regarding the civil service law or regulations. It's not included as something that the Merit Board or the University System would consider, and it has no bearing on the case otherwise. Again, it was a bare-bones motion, and there's nothing to indicate that any of these had anything to do with the underlying discharge which occurred in this case. However, if Ms. Minelli would like to pursue a claim, the Merit Board and the University System are not the appropriate forums for her to do so under the Illinois Caregiver Protection Law. She would pursue that in state court, but this is not the appropriate forum.

Finally, she has made a claim regarding due process and procedural violations. This was, frankly, a bulk of the 34 to 35 motions that Ms. Minelli had filed. Regarding due process, another motion was filed earlier that day, approximately 20 minutes before this one, and was independently dismissed by the hearing officer on the same day. Additionally, many of Ms. Minelli's due process claims, or all the other due process hearing motions that she had filed, were either dismissed by the Executive Director or by the hearing officer after the conclusion of the hearing on the testimony and facts in the case.

Therefore, it's NEIU's position that the due process and claims of procedural violations have been resolved by either the Executive Director or the hearing officer in this matter and are now properly before the Merit Board. The hearing officer found that, in his view, all the records required to be provided, including, for example, her personnel records, were provided to Ms. Minelli. There were no deficiencies in any of the records provided to her, which were the bulk of her alleged due process claims in this case.

In short, NEIU complied with the regulations' requirements by providing all the documents it would use. Those were provided in advance, as required under the rules, a week prior to the hearing, and answered any information requests made by Ms. Minelli, providing those documents to her as well.

Mr. Kvedaras inquired about the fourth point, specifically the due-process violation. The complaint specifically addresses the failure to disclose the identity of the hearing officer. How does this failure to disclose the identity of the hearing officer relate to this point? Mr. Burmeister responded that that was one of the previous 34 or 35 motions that were presented and denied or dismissed either by the Executive Director or by the hearing officer. There is no requirement that the hearing officer be disclosed before the hearing begins, and he would argue that there was no due process violation because NEIU had the same and was similarly not notified who the hearing officer would be. Both parties were notified simultaneously. There are provisions within the code, however, and regulations that state that if there is a bias issue, it can be raised. However, in this instance, Ms. Minelli didn't raise any bias issues with the hearing officer.

Mr. Phillips requested confirmation of the accuracy of Mr. Burmeister's statement regarding the rules and the hearing officer's disclosure. Ms. Miller responded that Mr. Burmeister's statements regarding the pre-hearing activity, the Executive Director's rulings, and the hearing officer were all correct. Additionally, the points he made regarding our administrative rules and regulations governing this proceeding were accurate. And then, finally, the point is that Ms. Minelli may have claims regarding the EEOC, IDHR, or other agencies and statutes, which provide other forums for addressing those claims appropriately.

Mr. Burmeister addressed the issue of discharge in this case, rather than termination, because that's a separate part of the regulations. However, in this case, he was referring to the discharge of an employee under the code. In this instance, the hearing officer identified three reasons for the university seeking discharge: poor performance, insubordination, and failure to meet, which constitutes another form of insubordination toward the HR Director. This is an extraordinary disciplinary move by any employer. However, in this instance, the hearing officer did sustain the university's allegations and found cause to proceed with discipline on all three matters. To

address briefly the issue of why the university sought discharge: Ms. Minelli underwent a thorough progressive disciplinary process, including 5, 15, and 30-day suspensions, after which she returned to work. The reason this is somewhat extraordinary in these instances is that in each instance, NEIU, either through her direct supervisor, Tim Sheehan, or through the HR Director, Abby Murray, had either reached out to her independently or together to try to meet with her to improve her work performance. Each time the employee rebuffed them, she refused to meet with them to discuss improving her work performance. Accordingly, at least in his experience, part of the progressive disciplinary process involves using these disciplines to improve work performance. In this instance, the employee did not show any desire to meet with her supervisor or HR to improve her work performance.

However, the one area he wanted to highlight, is that following the 30-day suspension, Ms. Minelli's supervisor, and if you wanted to review the record in this case and the transcript, it's located on pages 78 and 79, that the supervisor, Tim Sheehan, was discussing how he tried to get Ms. Minelli to meet with him and she wouldn't do it. Without getting into the details of exactly what was going on in those instances, he concluded briefly by saying that within 24 hours to 48 hours of her returning to work after the 30-day suspension, she continued doing the same activity that she was doing, which caused her to have all the prior disciplines in the first case. NEIU attempted to address this employee's behavior multiple times. To go to the extent of discharge, it was done so because, as Mr. Sheehan states on the record, there was no connection in order to try to improve this employee's work performance. She was frankly unwilling to either meet to discuss or actively improve her work performance. Therefore, the university respectfully requests that the Merit Board both uphold the discipline, as the hearing officer found cause for discipline in this case, and proceed with its request for the discharge of this employee under the relevant regulations and statutes.

Consideration of Laura Minelli's Motion entitles "Emergency Motion to Postpone or Dismiss Hearing for State, Federal, and procedural violations," Discharge Proceeding Number NEIU-25-3 on August 13, 2025

Chair Butler asked for action on either approving or taking another action regarding Ms. Minelli's Emergency Motion to Postpone or Dismiss the Hearing. Mr. Kvedaras made a motion to deny Laura Minelli's Motion entitled "Emergency Motion to Postpone or Dismiss Hearing for State, Federal, and procedural violations." Dr. Navarro 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
Dr. Lang.....Absent
Mr. Phillips.....Aye
Mr. Quiara.....Aye
Mr. Simmons.....Abstain
Ms. Baurer.....Aye
Ms. Blackwell.....Absent
Chair Butler.....Aye

Mr. Cepeda.....Absent
Ms. Craig SchillingAye

Consideration of Discharge Proceeding Number NEIU-25-3 filed against Laura Minelli by Northeastern Illinois University

Chair Butler asked Ms. Minelli to present public comments.

Ms. Minelli stated that she was not here as a member of the public, that she was the petitioner in discharge case NEIU-25-3, and that her filings were submitted under the rules governing formal responses, not as public comments. She stated she never requested to make public comments, and her legal filings should not have been downgraded as such. This was done by Teresa, the Merit Board Secretary. Ms. Minelli said she requested that her October 31st reply be recognized as a formal legal response and that it be properly reviewed before any final decisions were made by the Merit Board. Regarding the August 13th motion to postpone or dismiss this discharge proceeding, as the pre-hearing process was fundamentally flawed and violated both state and federal due process protections, that motion has been pending for nearly four months without resolution.

Ms. Minelli stated that her motion identifies that the Executive Director, who served in a pre-hearing role, should have recused herself due to prior involvement, demonstrated bias, and conflicts of interest, including private phone calls with both Abby Murray, who is the HR Director at NEIU, and a witness in this case, as well as Paul Burmeister, the NEIU counsel in this matter. Despite that, the Executive Director made key evidentiary rulings, denied, concealed, and blocked access to critical records and system logs. Mr. Burmeister himself discussed the matters she ruled on. As a result, Ms. Minelli stated she was denied the ability to prepare a defense or present any meaningful evidence. If this case proceeds without granting the motion, Ms. Minelli will have nothing in the record for the Merit Board to rule on through no fault of her own. The impact on due process has been severe.

Ms. Minelli further stated that she had filed multiple motions, as Mr. Burmeister said, and raised these concerns repeatedly, which is why there are so many motions. She said she raised these concerns repeatedly and asked for fair treatment. Instead, NEIU's attorney was granted special access to the Executive Director just yesterday, following a private phone call. Agency staff, including Jenn Miles and Maggie Miller, reached out to him with reminders for filing motions or objections and assistance to facilitate his participation here to date in front of you, even though his motion to give oral argument was not filed in the proper manner and should not even have been discussed or voted on. Meanwhile, her own timely filing, which Mr. Burmeister had mentioned he wasn't sure about, was filed on October 24. They were ignored and mischaracterized.

She stated that the October 24 response, which attempted to follow the rule by having the board review the evidence and answer questions, was denied by Teresa, the Board's Secretary. She said she followed up for over four weeks and was denied each time. At 4:26 pm yesterday, as Mr. Burmeister had mentioned the time, she stated she had received a letter from Teresa that admits it was timely but was never sent to the board, and then that is the end of the sentence. Teresa

didn't give an excuse or a reason, nor did she apologize. She doesn't say that she is going to send it. It's just, yes, they were timely, and yes, I didn't submit them.

Additionally, Ms. Minelli's October 31 reply was labeled as a public comment, which she discussed earlier, when it was actually a lawful response under the University System rules. These are not minor mistakes. These are due process violations that directly affect my ability to participate. If this board does not grant the August 13, 2025, motion, Ms. Minelli will have no evidence, no presentation, and no ability to defend herself in a proceeding that could ultimately affect her job, reputation, and, as Mr. Burmeister said, my caregiving ability for my parents.

Mr. Philips made a motion that the Merit Board go into Closed Session to discuss the discharge case. Mr. Simmons seconded Mr. Phillips' motion. In accordance with the Merit Board Bylaws and Open Meetings Act, a roll call vote was taken, and the motion was approved with the following vote:

Mr. Phillips	Aye
Mr. Quiara	Aye
Mr. Simmons	Aye
Ms. Baurer	Aye
Ms. Blackwell	Absent
Chair Butler	Aye
Mr. Cepeda	Absent
Ms. Craig Schilling	Aye
Mr. Kvedaras	Aye
Dr. Navarro	No
Dr. Lang	Absent

The Merit Board entered Closed Session at 2:55 pm.

The Merit Board returned to Open Session at 3:10 pm.

Ms. Miller provided a summary of the discharge case, stating that NEIU, filed Written Charges for Discharge against Laura Minelli on June 5, 2025. Ms. Minelli submitted her request for a hearing in a timely manner on June 17, 2025. The hearing was convened on August 13, 2025, under the purview of Hearing Officer Aaron Janik. Ms. Minelli began her employment at NEIU on February 1, 2016, as an Admissions Records Specialist I. Ms. Minelli was promoted to the Program Services Specialist classification on August 9, 2018.

Throughout her employment at NEIU, Ms. Minelli worked in the Office of Graduate Admissions and was primarily responsible for answering questions from prospective applicants. NEIU submitted evidence of progressive discipline and filed three charges for discharge, referencing a three-day period following Ms. Minelli's return from a 30-day disciplinary suspension. Specifically, NEIU alleged that Ms. Minelli refused to perform the assigned work and that she forwarded all incoming calls from prospective students to voicemail, despite repeated instructions to answer them.

NEIU also alleged that Ms. Minelli was insubordinate, rude, and disrespectful in declining two meetings with her supervisor after returning from a 30-day suspension for the same, and they allege that she also refused to meet with the Associate Vice President of Human Resources after being told that the meeting was not optional. The Hearing Officer found that NEIU sustained its burden of proof on all three charges with credible, corroborated evidence.

Chair Butler asked if there were any questions or follow-up.

Mr. Simmons made a motion to discharge Laura Minelli. Ms. Baurer seconded Mr. Simmons' motion. In accordance with the Merit Board Bylaws and Open Meetings Act, a roll call vote was taken, and the motion was approved with the following vote:

Mr. Simmons.....Aye
 Ms. Baurer.....Aye
 Ms. BlackwellAbsent
 Chair ButlerAye
 Mr. Cepeda.....Absent
 Ms. Craig SchillingAye
 Mr. Kvedaras.....Aye
 Dr. Navarro.....Aye
 Dr. LangAbsent
 Mr. PhillipsAye
 Mr. Quiara.....Aye

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



**STATE OF ILLINOIS
 STATE UNIVERSITIES CIVIL SERVICE SYSTEM**

NORTHEASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY)	BEFORE THE UNIVERSITY CIVIL SERVICE
Employer,)	MERIT BOARD
v.)	
LAURA MINELLI,)	DISCHARGE PROCEEDING
Employee.)	No. NEIU-25-3

DECISION AND ORDER OF THE UNIVERSITY CIVIL SERVICE MERIT BOARD

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Discharge proceedings have been commenced by **NORTHEASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY**, Employer, against **LAURA MINELLI**, Employee, by service of Written Charges for Discharge by

overnight service, on June 5, 2025, and the Employee, **LAURA MINELLI**, has filed a timely written request for a Hearing. A Hearing was duly convened, held, and concluded on August 13, 2025, 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 June 5, 2025
2. Suspension Notice Pending Discharge, dated June 5, 2025
3. Employee's Request for Hearing, dated June 17, 2025
4. Acknowledgement of Hearing Request, dated June 17, 2025
5. Notice of Appointment as Hearing Officer and Notice of Convening of Hearing to the Hearing Officer, dated June 18, 2025
6. Notice of Convening of Hearing to the parties of record, dated June 18, 2025
7. Order Regarding Procedures for Remote Hearing, dated June 20, 2025
8. Employee Motion entitled, "Demand for Hearing Continuance and Disclosure of Ethics Conflict," dated July 2, 2025
9. Order regarding Employee Request for Continuance, dated July 3, 2025
10. Employee Brief in Support of Request for Continuance, dated July 11, 2025
11. Employer's Response to Employee's Request for Continuance, dated July 18, 2025
12. Employee's Objection to Employer's Response to Employee's Request for Continuance, dated July 18, 2025
13. Employee's Motion entitled, "Motion to Disqualify Counsel," dated July 20, 2025
14. Employer's Response to Employee's Motion to Disqualify Counsel, dated July 21, 2025
15. Order regarding Employee's Motion for Continuance, dated July 22, 2025
16. Order regarding Employee's Motion to Disqualify Counsel, dated July 22, 2025
17. Amended Notice of Convening of Hearing to the Hearing Officer, dated July 23, 2025
18. Amended Notice of Convening of Hearing to the parties of record, dated July 23, 2025
19. Employee's Filing entitled, "Record Clarification and Formal §250.110(f)(5)(C) Document Requests, dated July 23, 2025
20. Employee's Motion entitled, "Supplemental Motion to Strike and Disqualify DER Representative," dated July 27, 2025
21. Employee's Motion entitled, "Supplemental Motion to Strike June 5 Unpaid Status," dated July 27, 2025
22. Employee's Motion entitled, "Motion to Strike Incomplete Employment File," dated July 27, 2025
23. Employee's Motion entitled, "Motion to Compel Personnel File, Impose Sanctions, and Extend Deadlines," dated July 29, 2025
24. Employee's Motion entitled, "Supplemental Motion to Address Obstruction of Benefits Access, Procedural Bias, Due Process Violations, and Request for Sanctions and Corrective Relief," dated July 30, 2025

25. Employer's Response to Employee's Request for Information, dated July 31, 2025
26. Employer's Consolidated Response to Employee's Motions, dated July 31, 2025
27. Employee's Motion entitled, "Motion to Strike – Alternatively, Response to NEIU's July 31, 2025, Consolidated Response to Appellant's Motions," dated August 1, 2025
28. Employee's Motion entitled, "Motion for Continuance of Hearing and Extension of Time for Pre-Hearing Submissions," dated August 1, 2025
29. Order regarding Motions Filed by Employee the Week of July 27, 2025, dated August 1, 2025
30. Order Clarifying Order Entered August 1, 2025, dated August 2, 2025
31. Employee's Motion entitled, "Renewed Motion for Continuance Based on Procedural Deficiencies and Lack of Identified Hearing Officer," dated August 3, 2025
32. Employee's Motion entitled, "Motion to Compel Identification of Hearing Officer and Object to Procedural Violations Under 80 ILL. Adm. Code 250.110(f)(6)(A)," dated August 3, 2025
33. Employee's Motion entitled, "Supplemental Motion – Procedural Obstruction and Emergency Relief Record Preservation," dated August 3, 2025
34. Order regarding Motions Filed by Employee on August 3, 2025, dated August 4, 2025
35. Employee's Supplemental Filing entitled, "Appellant's Notice of NEIU's Non-Response and Request for Ruling on Outstanding Motions," dated August 5, 2025
36. Employer's Supplemental Response to Employee's Request for Information, dated August 5, 2025
37. Employee's Motion entitled, "Motion to Recuse Executive Director Gail Schiesser and Request for Independent Review of Procedural Misconduct," dated August 6, 2025
38. Employer's response entitled, "Response to Ms. Minelli's August 6 Motion," dated August 6, 2025
39. Employee's Reply entitled, "Reply in Support of Motion to Recuse Executive Director and for Independent Review," dated August 6, 2025
40. Order regarding Motions Filed by Employee August 3 - 6, 2025, dated August 7, 2025
41. Employee's Motion entitled, "Motion to Preserve and Enter into Record - Objection to Inaccessible August 7, 2025, SUCSS Order," dated August 7, 2025
42. Employee's Motion entitled, "Motion for Continuance – Due to Late Discovery of New Evidence," dated August 8, 2025
43. Employee's Motion entitled, "Motion for Continuance - Due to Late Discovery of New Evidence and Executive Director's Procedural Duties," dated August 8, 2025
44. Employee's Motion entitled, "Supplemental Motion Regarding Discovery Deadline Miscalculation and Mischaracterization of Evidence Volume," dated August 8, 2025
45. Employee Motion entitled, "Demand for Immediate Ruling on Pending Motion to Recuse," dated August 8, 2025
46. Employer's response entitled, "Response to Ms. Minelli's August 8, 2025, Motion in Matter NEIU-25-3," dated August 8, 2025
47. Order regarding Motions Filed by Employee on August 7 and 8, 2025, dated August 8, 2025
48. Employer's Exhibit List, and Witness List, dated August 8, 2025
49. Employee's Exhibit List, Dated August 8, 2025
50. Employee's Subpoena List, Witness and Document Custodians, dated August 8, 2025
51. Subpoena's Provided to Employee, dated August 11, 2025

- Claudia Mercado, NEIU Administration
 - Timothy Sheahan, Supervisor
 - Steven Pajak, NEIU UTS/IT
 - Katrina E. Bell-Jordan, NEIU Administration
 - Abby Murray, NEIU Human Resources
 - Emma Lubing, NEIU Staff
 - R. Shayne Cofer, Ph. D, NEIU Administration
 - Max Kruczek, NEIU Human Resources
 - Rina Charters, NEIU Staff
 - Sarah Joy Castellones, NEIU Staff
 - Faviola Kallas, NEIU Staff
 - Mohammad A Rahman, NEIU UTS
 - Custodian of Records, NEIU Graduate Admissions
 - Custodian of Records, NEIU Undergraduate Admissions
 - Custodian of Records, NEIU Transfer Admissions
 - Custodian of Records, NEIU Registration and Records
 - Custodian of Records, NEIU Human Resources
 - Custodian of Records, NEIU Academic Advising
 - Custodian of Records, NEIU University Technology Services (UTS)
 - Custodian of Records, NEIU Payroll
 - Custodian of Records, Information Technology (IT) Department
 - Custodian of Records, NEIU Key Control Office
 - Custodian of Records, NEIU Parking Services
 - Custodian of Records, NEIU Police Department
52. Employee's Motion entitled, "Motion to Halt Proceedings, Recuse Executive Director for Bias, and Compel Metadata/Native Format Production," dated August 11, 2025
 53. Employee's Motion entitled, "Emergency Objection to Deferral of Recusal Motion," dated August 11, 2025
 54. Employee's Motion entitled, "Emergency Objection to Constructive Denial of Subpoena Rights and Violation of Due Process," dated August 11, 2025
 55. Order regarding Motions Filed by Employee on August 8 and 11, 2025, dated August 11, 2025
 56. Employer's Motion entitled, "Combined Motion to Quash Subpoena in Matter NEIU-25-3 and Response to August 11 'Emergency' Motion," dated August 12, 2025
 57. Employee's Response to NEIU's "Combined Motion to Quash Subpoena and Response to 'Emergency' Motion," dated August 12, 2025
 58. Employee's Motion entitled, "Motion to Strike Altered Version of 'Intent to Discharge' from Evidence, Remove from Personnel File, and Compel Production of Certified Original," dated August 12, 2025
 59. Employee's Motion entitled, "Motion to Strike or Compel Supplementation of Incomplete Slate Activity Log," dated August 12, 2025
 60. Employee's Motion entitled, "Motion to Strike or Compel Supplementation of Deficient Information Request Responses," dated August 12, 2025
 61. Employee's Motion entitled, "Motion to Strike or Compel Identification of Unknown Drafter and Legal Review of Information Request Responses," dated August 12, 2025
 62. Employee's Motion entitled, "Motion to Strike or Compel Hearing Due to Late Disclosure

- of Bates-Numbered Exhibits," dated August 12, 2025
63. Employee's Motion entitled, "Motion to Compel Issuance of Omitted Subpoena for R. Shayne Cofer and Continue Hearing," dated August 12, 2025
 64. Employee's Motion entitled, "Time-Sensitive: Preemptive Jurisdiction Objection to Participation of Executive Director in Adjudicative Proceedings," dated August 12, 2025
 65. Employee's Motion entitled, "Motion for On-Record Confirmation and Ruling on Pending Motions Before Commencement of Testimony," dated August 12, 2025
 66. Employee's Motion entitled, "Motion to Preserve Objection to Same-Day Identification of Hearing Officer and Request for Pre-Hearing Disclosure," dated August 12, 2025
 67. Order regarding Motions Filed August 11 and 12, 2025, dated August 12, 2025
 68. Employee's Motion entitled, "Motion for Reconsideration of Ruling on Timeliness," dated August 12, 2025
 69. Employee's Motion entitled, "Pre-Conference Preservation Notice and Objection to August 12 Ruling," dated August 12, 2025
 70. Employee's Motion entitled, "Motion for Continuance and to Vacate Proceedings Due to Failure to Recuse," dated August 13, 2025
 71. Employee's Motion entitled, "Emergency Motion to Postpone or Dismiss Hearing for Federal, State, and Procedural Violations," dated August 13, 2025
 72. Transcript of Hearing, August 13, 2025
 73. Exhibits admitted into Record at Hearing, August 13, 2025
 74. Request for Findings of Fact from Hearing Officer, dated September 19, 2025
 75. Findings of Fact rendered by Hearing Officer, dated September 26, 2025.

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:

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, **NORTHEASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY**, to the extent not inconsistent with the findings made herein.
2. The Employee, **LAURA MINELLI**, is hereby separated from the service of her Employer, **NORTHEASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY**, and the effective date of her discharge shall be December 9, 2025.
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 are as follows:

Hearing Officer
Mr. Aaron Janik
Attorney at Law

Parties of Record
Ms. Laura Minelli
Employee

Mr. Paul H. Burmeister
Attorney for the Employer

DATED AND ENTERED this 9th day of December 2025.

UNIVERSITY CIVIL SERVICE MERIT BOARD

By: /s/John Butler
John Butler, Chair
University Civil Service Merit Board

ATTEST:
/s/ Teresa Rademacher
Teresa Rademacher
Secretary for the Merit Board

Consideration of the FY 2026 Schedule of Meetings of the Merit Board

Chair Butler asked for action on either approving the 2026 meeting dates or taking another action. After discussion, Mr. Simmons made a motion to approve the dates of March 10, 2026, August 11, 2026, and November 17, 2026. Ms. Craig Schilling seconded Mr. Simmons' motion. In accordance with the Merit Board Bylaws and Open Meetings Act, a roll call vote was taken, and the motion was approved with the following vote:

Mr. Simmons.....Aye
Ms. Baurer.....Aye
Ms. BlackwellAbsent
Chair ButlerAye
Mr. Cepeda.....Absent
Ms. Craig SchillingAye
Mr. KvedarasAye
Dr. Navarro.....Aye
Dr. LangAbsent
Mr. PhillipsAye
Mr. Quiara.....Aye

Review of Recent Activities of Audit Group, Classification, Examination, and Compensation Group – Brett Wawrzynek

Brett Wawrzynek stated that the audit team is continuing to conduct practice audits using the new methodology and is reviewing and revising the remaining audit reports in the current checkline. He stated they continue to review the topics to be examined, and the records requested from employers and reviewed during the audit process. He said they have scheduled their first entrance meeting for the first audit of the fully revamped audit program. In the coming weeks and months, the department will continue to launch audits for the remaining places of employment on the audit schedule, which is posted on the agency website.

For the Classification, Examination, and Compensation division, 11 classifications are in the revision stage, and one is in the development stage.

- Four classification titles are being revised to reflect legislative changes.
- The Illinois statute governing the practice of veterinary technicians was amended effective January 1, 2026, and will require title changes to certain classifications. The Security Officer Series is being revised to address concerns about the ability to recruit qualified candidates, which has resulted in a multi-million-dollar budgetary expenditure to outsource. The Security Officer class currently requires a credential that exceeds the requirements of the State of Illinois. The team also found that the required experience could be expanded to allow for transferable skills.
- The Member Services Representative Series is also undergoing revision to address hiring concerns. The department has expanded the minimum acceptable qualifications to accommodate transferable skills and revised the duties to better align with the employer's needs. The department continues to focus on systematically reviewing classifications identified for revision and requests for new classes. The University System currently has over 100 classifications on this list for further analysis and is working its way through them.

Since the last Merit Board meeting, our team has processed requests for one Intern Appointment, 11 Contract Appointments, three Compensatory Qualifications, 49 Student Appointment exceptions, five Extra Help Extensions, one courtesy score, and specialty factors for 24 positions.

Report of the Executive Director – Gail Schiesser

Executive Director Schiesser stated that the University System has had two new hires in the agency since the August Merit Board Meeting. Specifically, Maleah Perry and Sharnelle Kimbrough have joined the agency

The DERs, including Ms. Lopez, have discussed various perceived issues related to slow or outdated systems, and the Executive Director offered a counterpoint. Between the days our agency decided to fill an open position and the day the offer letter was sent, 16 days passed. Not 16 weeks, not several months, 16 days, less than a month, expired between the time the agency decided to fill a position and the day we were able to fill it. Because the agency follows its rules, and what they provide. If employers were to apply the rules in the same way our agency did, as intended, she suspected they would be able to act as quickly as the Agency did.

FY 25 had a lump-sum appropriation of \$1,444,500. A total of \$290,167 was lapsed. \$100,000 had been appropriated for police testing; that amount lapsed, and an additional \$190,000 was lapsed partially to staff turnover. As for our current budget year, the FY 26 appropriation is \$1,510,000. As of the end of November, the agency had expended \$499,900. The agency has approximately \$753,000 in obligations for the remainder of the year.

Finally, Executive Director Schiesser offered an update on police testing, as Chief Woodruff discussed earlier. As the board may recall, at the Merit Board's April meeting, the University System proposed changes to the administrative rules regarding the administration of police testing. That proposal has been withdrawn, and the agency has no intention of reviving it. During the April meeting, following public comments by several university police chiefs, Merit Board members encouraged the agency to meet with the university chiefs and HR directors to see if everyone could reach some accord and move the matter of police testing forward. On May 14, 2025, the agency held a meeting with Police Chiefs and HR directors to gather information regarding professionally developed examinations for the Police Officer, Police Corporal, Police Sergeant, and Police telecommunicator classifications. During that meeting, the HR Directors and Police Chiefs requested the research that had been discussed previously. The University System was unable to locate that information. Ms. Borman, HR Assistant Manager, conducted new research. Contrary to Chief Woodruff's suggestion that the agency dismissed any idea of credential assessment, the agency found no research on police testing that supported it.

In October, the agency was ready to present its findings and organized a series of meetings to share the research with the various Police Chiefs and HR Directors. The University System typically holds these meetings in small groups, having found over the past several years that they are much more productive and that the agency gathers better feedback when the size is limited. A total of eight meetings were held, and the agency's findings were delivered to the Police Chiefs and HR Directors. The agency is willing to meet anyone who would like to.

At the May 2025 meeting, a suggestion was made to write a credential assessment examination for the four Police and Telecommunicator classifications. As discussed, credential assessments are a systematic method for evaluating an applicant's education, experience, and other skills relevant to the duties performed by employees in the classification. Most examinations in the university system currently use credential assessments. However, Police Officers, Police Corporals, and Police Sergeants differ significantly from employees in other classifications in our classification plan. Employees and other classifications are not called to use such a wide range of knowledge, skills, and abilities. Police Officers, Police Corporals, and Police Sergeants are routinely called on to gather information, manage conflicts, and respond quickly, effectively, and calmly during emergencies, sometimes doing all of those things at once. No other classification is literally called on to preserve life and property and protect constitutional rights, and no other classification has the authority to limit a person's liberty. Our research also shows that while credential assessments are valid predictors of technical knowledge, they are poor predictors of the important cognitive and non-cognitive competencies required by police classifications. So, the University System needs to treat these classifications differently. Credential assessments also significantly narrow the applicant pool. This is an unacceptable result, given the report by our police departments that they are already receiving too few applicants for the numerous positions

to fill. Our research, combined with feedback from the Police Chiefs and HR Directors, suggests that a credential assessment would not be a reasonable or practical method for these classifications. The University System has concluded that a professionally developed examination specifically designed for these unique roles would comply with our obligations under the Act.

Another suggestion offered at the meeting was that an examination could be developed specially for our agency for these four classifications. Unfortunately, the time and cost required for the agency to develop those examinations would be prohibitive.

During our meetings, the Police Chiefs expressed an interest in examinations that eliminated the oral board component. They also expressed interest in ensuring the examination included a component that assesses an applicant's writing skills. The Police Chiefs are also interested in being more involved in the process of procuring professionally prepared examinations than is usual. Executive Director Schiesser said that the procurement process has its own challenges and limitations. The University System is committed to involving and including the Police Chiefs and HR Directors in the process to the extent possible within the confines of the procurement process structure and rules, while avoiding problems that could arise. Problems arise when the agency doesn't manage the process properly, such as complaints and the elimination of potential vendors due to noncompliance in a heavily regulated process. Updating examinations for classifications within our classification plan is a routine function of this agency. The University System is working with our State Procurement Officer to determine whether a Request for Information (RFI) is the appropriate path, as well as the kinds of questions that could be asked in an RFI to test vendors. Our State Procurement Officer must approve any request for information before the agency can send it out.

Executive Director Schiesser said she committed to the Police Chiefs and HR Directors, and to the board, that the agency will include them to the extent possible as the process moves forward. The agency will move forward with procuring professionally developed, validated, and proven examinations for the Police Officer, Police Corporal, Police Sergeant, and Police Telecommunicator classifications.

Chair Butler asked the Executive Director if there were any deviations between the University System's plans and the articulation of the Police Chiefs' view of what has been agreed upon. Executive Director Schiesser responded that, to the extent possible, the agency can include both the Police Chiefs and HR Directors/Personnel on the campuses. The University System can't exceed what's permitted under the procurement rules and regulations. Regarding the November memorandum from Chief Booker, Executive Director Schiesser said that it was correct that she had not responded.

Report of Legal Counsel – Maggie Miller

Ms. Miller stated that, so far in FY 26, 23 Written Charges for Discharge have been served on employees at the various universities and agencies. There have been five requests for a hearing. Of those five, one employee withdrew their request for a hearing and was consequently discharged by operation of rule, one matter was resolved through a settlement agreement between the employee and the university, one was resolved at this meeting, and two matters are still pending for hearing.

Ms. Miller further stated that the only pending case has been resolved since the last board meeting: Vincent Bradford versus the Merit Board, case number 2021CH261, in the Circuit Court of Cook County. In summary of that matter, on December 10, 2020, the Merit Board discharged Mr. Vincent Bradford from his employment at the University of Illinois at Chicago. Mr. Bradford filed a complaint for administrative review in the Circuit Court of Cook County, which was ultimately dismissed on July 7, 2023, for failure to name and serve all necessary parties.

Mr. Bradford appealed the dismissal of his complaint, and on May 14, 2025, the appellate court affirmed the trial court's dismissal of his second amended complaint. On June 11, 2025, Mr. Bradford filed a petition for rehearing, and on June 27, 2025, the appellate court denied it for lack of jurisdiction. On July 24, 2025, Mr. Bradford wrote a letter to the Supreme Court of Illinois requesting a reversal of the appellate court's most recent order.

In August 2025, Mr. Bradford filed a petition for leave to appeal to the Illinois Supreme Court. In September 2025, the Illinois Supreme Court granted his motion, permitting him to file a petition for leave to appeal. In October 2025, Mr. Bradford filed that petition, and the Illinois Supreme Court denied his petition for leave to appeal on November 26, 2025. The Supreme Court's November decision concludes Mr. Bradford's matter. That is the last stop in this process.

Other Items as presented

Chair Butler stated that the next meeting is scheduled for March 10, 2026.

Mr. Simmons made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Kvedaras 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
Ms. Baurer.....	Aye
Ms. Blackwell	Absent
Chair Butler	Aye
Mr. Cepeda.....	Absent
Ms. Craig Schilling	Aye
Mr. Kvedaras	Aye
Dr. Navarro.....	Yes
Dr. Lang	Absent
Mr. Phillips	Aye
Mr. Quiara.....	Aye

The meeting adjourned at 4:00 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

March 10, 2026

Date