Alumni members (in order of seating):
Susan Tomlinson-Roberts
Joy Williamson
Thor Jondahl
Howard Jordi
Bob Sobel
Raymond Marsili
Malcolm D'Souza
Leo Barrett
Ronald Hennis
Gregory Webster

NIU-Chemistry Members:
Petr Vanýsek
Elizabeth Gaillard
James Horn
Victor Ryzhov

Summary of the meeting:
The goal is to keep open lines of communication amongst alumni and the department

Action items:
1. Distribute notes from the meeting (these notes) as soon as possible and return them back with comments and additions from all participants.
2. Work on a “book” with cameo presentations about experience starting with education and going into life using (or not using) the education background. Susan Tomlinson-Roberts expressed some willingness to help this started; Ronald Hennis can summarize what happened during his 35-year experience after graduation, when, having diverse background, he became a problem solver.

Prior to the panel discussion some topics for discussion were suggested:

Teaching – Any outreach (such as faculty coming out) or residency (instructors coming in); new topics, subjects, courses, initiatives affecting the interests of our alumni; or cooperative learning.

Research – Available service research at NIU; available service facilities outside NIU, made available through alumni; visitors, residencies, sabbaticals; outside funding/how to make it possible.
Group Discussion Summary

Early in the discussion it was observed that intellectual property issue could be a hurdle for doing any work at NIU. Companies will want to retain property rights for obvious reasons and thus will prefer to do the work on their own sites. Likewise, sending students to do work at a company could have similar problem. Although the students/visitors could sign nondisclosure agreements and then work at a company, there would be only slim prospect of having the work published or put into a thesis. Also, any work requiring FDA approval may be difficult, though such work is likely not to be done outside the company gates.

From the perspective of collaboration with an alumnus at another university, such work is straightforward and beneficial.

There is also some legal limitation how and where to solicit contacts with companies (presumably with the purpose of getting support). A suitable venue was suggested: NIU could get some visibility at local or (locally organized) national meetings. In the past there used to be NIU Alumni get togethers at ACS meetings (such as in Chicago). Apparently this practice has stopped. It was recommended to revive and strengthen such initiatives.

Another possibility how to circumvent the prohibited uninvited solicitation of help and funds is to join a social group such as LinkedIn or FaceBook, where the contacts, after joining, would be by default by invitation. The alumni have to spread the word of activities done at NIU.

There is new movement in the industry to offer sabbaticals to workers. If this becomes greater trend, then NIU should position itself to host a few such visitors.

Conversely, students, while in the program, need to have more contact with industry and learn what the life is out there after graduation. The input they are getting from the professors about academic life is just a small percentage of the jobs the students will eventually hold. One suggestion was to bring in more speakers from industry to break the culture shock after graduation.

Is there any way that the students could contact the alumni directly? It can be done, even through dedicating a web page on the departmental web to the alumni. However, this would be visible to the public at large. An alternative, for example, a Yahoo Group, which would be open only to those registered (might be a better choice).

Mentoring program for students, with input provided by experienced alumni, could be a remarkable contribution to the education of students.