MINUTES

APPROVED


Absent: J. Gau/EET

Guest: D. Smith, Catalog Editor/Curriculum Coordinator

I. Adoption of Agenda

A motion was made by Snow, seconded by Baker, to approve the agenda. The motion carried.

II. Announcements

Birberick welcomed everyone and asked each member to introduce themselves and indicate what area they were representing. She summarized the agenda packet and explained that all the other curricular committees’ minutes filter through UCC for acceptance. Representatives for the standing committees of UCC would be chosen under New Business.

A. Approval of Minutes

The minutes from the May meeting were approved electronically.

III. Reports/Minutes from Standing Committees

A. Admissions Policies and Academic Standards Committee

Vice Provost Birberick highlighted the actions taken by the Admissions Policies and Academic Standards committee during the April 18, 2012 meeting. The main action was that APASC made a recommendation for a plus/minus grading policy. Included with the minutes is an appendix which was a report prepared by two members of the Faculty Senate. This report was presented to APASC and discussed. The report offers three different models for a plus/minus system. APASC adopted system III
with 8 voting in favor and one voting no. She said System III does not include an A+ or a C-.

Aase mentioned that he understood that the Graduate Council had accepted a similar scale and it has been implemented. Birberick confirmed that was the case.

Stafstrom asked about implementation. Birberick explained what the process would be – if the minutes were received by UCC as is then Birberick would notify Alan Rosenbaum of University Council and if they approved the policy change then it would be put in the catalog beginning Fall 2013. There was discussion regarding the impact on students. All undergraduate students regardless of when they entered NIU would have the grading policy applied.

Conklin commented that as a result of the adoption of the grading policy for graduate courses those teaching combined 400/500 level courses are somewhat ill advised to create a master class with basically two sections of the course because of the different grading scales. This would be something that would likely continue depending on the similarities of the two grading policies. Birberick added that she has had conversations with Dean Bond regarding courses containing both undergrad and graduate students and there really should be separate syllabi and requirements for the different level of students in the course.

Stafstrom made a motion to receive the minutes of the APASC committee held April 18, 2012, seconded by Snow. **Motion passed unanimously.**

### B. Committee on the Improvement of Undergraduate Education

Stafstrom reported on the April 9, 2012 meeting of CIUE. He said there was one critical item which has to do with the submission of nominations for the Excellence in Undergraduate in Teaching and Instructor awards. The committee received lots of good nominations. There is a standard form to be filled out with a rubric to complete and many on the committee felt it was inadequate for various reasons. The real goal is to ultimately make the process fair and complete. The nominations are initiated by student organizations, which is very important but also a bit of an Achilles heel because they are not as versed in how to prepare things as people more advanced in their careers. He spoke of the nomination form and the various areas where responses are to be provided. One area that there was no formal way to have input of information was the letters of recommendation. Many committee members felt the letters were one of the most important features of the whole process so that information needs to be formally incorporated. To make what needs to be done clearer is the objective. With the use of a checklist, it is hoped that the nominations received by CIUE will be full and complete and the committee secretary will not have to make that type of determination. Another issue with the letters of recommendation is, since everything comes in
electronically these days, what constitutes a proper signature. What they were leaning towards is having everything submitted as pdf’s – requiring a signature as opposed to letters coming in the form of an email or a word document attached to an email. Lastly was the question of the CV. Some felt it was good to have it for reference but others felt that it did not have a lot of relevance and added confusion to the process. Stafstrom stated the document was pretty good overall with a few lapses and the committee is just trying to make it better.

Conklin mentioned that it is one of the most tedious processes she has ever been involved with and if there is any way to streamline it - she suggests the committee do that. Stafstrom mentioned that a frustration for the committee, although they received many strong applications – in some cases what made a certain application rise to the top was how the material was assembled. The committee wants to eliminate that as a factor. C.T. Lin expressed the importance of the CV. He felt it was a necessary item in this case. Stafstrom agreed it is for informational purposes. Birberick said they would take this information to the committee to use as they look to improve the process.

S. Conklin made a motion to receive the minutes of the April 9, 2012 CIUE meeting, seconded by K. Wiemer. **Motion passed unanimously.**

**C. Committee on the Undergraduate Academic Environment**

Birberick highlighted the CUAE committee meeting minutes from April. Basically there were two discussions. The first had to do with the USOAR process. The committee approved the guidelines for USOAR giving students the opportunity for funding in the fall and spring instead of just once a year. Julia Spears, Director of the Office of Student Engagement and Experiential Learning gave an update on the new process and how it had worked.

The second part of the meeting focused on where the committee may want to move in the future. Birberick said the committee spends a lot of time listening to reports from constituents on campus about the campus environment (i.e., Student Affairs, First-Year Experience, Housing & Dining, the ombudsman, Chief Grady). The committee felt they would like to take a more focused look and they would like to not just receive information but make recommendations. They cannot create policy but they could make suggestions to other committees. Topics for next year were discussed. They are looking to define a narrower focus.

M. Lilly made a motion to accept the CUAE minutes, seconded by K. Wiemer. The **motion passed unanimously.**
D. Committee on the Undergraduate Curriculum

There was no CUC report.

E. General Education Committee

Wiener spoke about the GEC meeting of April 19th saying there was quite a bit of overlap with the meeting of the 26th. The big issue of the GEC committee is the Higher Learning Commission report and brainstorming what kind of data can be used to complete it. What needs to be used for future assessment and how to improve the process is part of the discussion. In addition to the shortage of data to assess certain aspects of the gen ed program and finding ways to use data already available.

Birberick announced that a General Education Coordinator was hired effective July 1st. It is Michael Kolb from the Department of Anthropology.

Kot commented that she had served many years on the GEC and for the collection of assessment data she recalls a one-page questionnaire for faculty to complete each time a general education course was taught. Birberick confirmed that was indeed the case but when the idea was presented to the different colleges – LA&S was very against it and for the moment was tabled as it is worked through. Kot indicated she thought that still left the committee without data to assess. It is the hope of the committee that the hiring of the coordinator will help with the issue and the revision of the gen ed program. The current focus is the Higher Learning Commission and what is needed to provide them.

K. Wiemer made a motion to receive the minutes of the General Education committee from April 19, 2012, seconded by J. Stafstrom. Motion passed unanimously.

Keddie reported that the April 26th meeting was a continuation of the previous meeting. They were brainstorming about how they can obtain the data they need for the Higher Learning Commission. There are Goals A, B, C and D. There is data for Goal A. The data for Goals B, C and D – they have to hunt for. There might be some data from the Research and Artistry for Goal B. For Goal C there might be some data from the Capstone projects. For Goal D NSSE data might help.

Sciences and math courses are going to come up for review this coming year. It was discussed how to make the whole resubmission process easier. One suggestion was to put examples of good resubmissions on the website. It was also suggested that revisions to the bylaws and APPM be made.
Birberick stated a committee is working on issues related to curriculum, the bylaws and APPM policies. She and Donna Smith are involved. They are looking at how the course syllabus process works. One of the things they noticed when coming up for resubmission – if you don’t meet the criteria there is nothing stated in a formal way that gives the GEC the right to say that a course can no longer count as a Gen Ed course. The objective is to clarify that following a certain procedure, the Gen Ed committee can write back and say that your course can no longer be listed as a Gen Ed course.

Stafstrom said he thought the new Gen Ed coordinator will be faced with the challenge of coming up with reasonable kinds of information to ask for. In addition he must have good communication with chairs, deans and departments and be given some authority to get things done. Birberick indicated that there are other committees along with GEC that deal with lack of authority and that is how the review of Bylaws and APPM was initiated.

K. Wiemer made a motion to receive the minutes of the General Education committee from April 26, 2012, seconded by C. Snow. Motion passed unanimously.

Birberick announced that there was Vision 2020 money that was devoted to a course transformation project. There was a call for nominations sponsored by the Office of the Vice Provost. They are looking at seven large lecture classes that are also listed as Gen Ed courses. This is a yearlong process. The purpose is to make them a more blended format of lecture using media-rich enhancements and then bringing in small group, experiential, engaged facet to it. The transformation process is modeled on the one used at University of North Texas, which has been in the large lecture course transformation business since the 90’s. UNT has been very successful and has transformed about 20 courses. It has improved student learning and student interest in the courses and they have included this information in their advertising campaign. Two individuals who have been heavily involved with the process will be on NIU’s campus to deliver a talk in September. This is one of the ways that we are trying to address some of those issues related to Gen Ed and the large lecture courses.

F. **University Honors Committee**

There was no report from Honors.

IV. **Other Reports**

A. **University Assessment Panel**

S. Conklin reported that at the last UAP meeting the committee said farewell to Virginia Cassidy and thanked her for all her work. The final version of the mission statement was
approved. The people who worked on that committee were highly commended for their hard work on that - especially Doris MacDonald from English.

V. New Business

A. Selection of Faculty Chair for UCC

Birberick indicated the first order of new business would be the election of faculty chair. Cason Snow, last year’s faculty chair informed the committee of the duties of the faculty chair. C.T. Lin nominated Cason to serve again, seconded by J. Isabel. By acclamation Cason Snow was elected faculty chair for 2012-2013.

B. Selection of representative to UCC standing committees:

The following committee members will serve on the UCC standing committees:

- APASC – Arlene Keddie
- CIUE – Joel Stafstrom
- CUAE - Michelle Lilly
- CUC – Gerald Aase
- GEC – Katja Wiemer and Carolyn Vander Schee
- UAP – Jeanne Isabel

C. Unit of Credit, Definition, Application and Process

Birberick explained that one of the areas that Higher Learning Commission will examine in their visit to NIU will be the issue of credit hour. It is a federal compliance issue. The federal government has a definition of what constitutes a credit hour and HLC is required to ensure that universities are in compliance. She stated that the definition came about as a response to the diploma mills and proprietaries but a policy cannot be created for a specific group; it has to apply across the board. During the summer it was discovered that there was no written policy and that is something that is needed to show the Higher Learning Commission when they come for their visit. Birberick explained that she, Brad Bond and Carolinda Douglass presented the policy to the Curricular Deans. Carolinda Douglass consulted with the HLC liaison about how these policies should look. They researched what other universities had done in response to their own regional certification processes. The policy has been presented to the Council of Deans and they have begun to share the policy with college senates and department chairs. Birberick indicated that she has brought the policy to UCC for approval so it can be moved forward.
Kot questioned the second half of the second paragraph where it talks about less structured, independent studies – established assessment/measure of student learning outcomes. Birberick said some background information is needed. She explained the HLC is going to require effective immediately, in preparation for the site visit, the collection of syllabi from faculty for all courses taught for this fall, the spring 13, summer 13 and fall 13. A process is being developed to collect those electronically. There will be a template to assist faculty in how they are meeting the requirements. The requirements are very vague because there is a great deal of variety. Birberick said they would probably discover instances where the federal definition is not being met. Appropriate adjustments will need to be made as the collection process continues. She cited an example of courses currently being offered for one credit where the face-to-face contact hours end up exceeding the time requirement for one credit but the time outside class is a little less. Stafstrom added this was discussed in his faculty meeting a few days ago and there were examples of the templates completed. He indicated there is a lot of variability/flexibility to apply to different types of courses. Birberick said that the HLC can request any syllabi – this is a way of getting prepared for what they may request. Suspicions are the HLC will be most interested in courses that are hybrid or taught online as well as courses with unusual credit hours, like UBUS 310.

Another issue this has brought to light is the establishment of a policy requiring a course syllabus. There is currently no such policy. That will be another area that will be further developed this fall. The question of not having a course syllabus was raised. Birberick responded by saying that you don't necessarily have a syllabus, i.e. master’s thesis or dissertation. They are examining areas where there might be exclusions, where there might be an agreement or proposal instead of the syllabus. An effort to incorporate this into MyNIU is being investigated as well where portions of the template would be pre-populated. All colleges except HHS have been presented the information and their meeting is scheduled for next week.

Aase asked if the vote could be deferred until the next meeting. He expressed the desire to get feedback from the faculty in his college. Birberick indicated the information was shared with the department chairs and one editorial amendment on the language was made. She explained the issue needed to move forward. Birberick felt taking the issue to faculty would do nothing but slow the process down. Isabel questioned the fact that HHS hasn’t been met with. She asked if the information was presented as policy and the group told to pass it to their faculty. Birberick confirmed that it was presented as it was developed. She reiterated that the policy was discussed with the Council of Deans. The curricular deans were involved with the policy development.

M. Lilly made a motion to approve the credit hour policy, seconded by J. Kot. 14 committee members voted to approve. There was one abstention. Motion passed.
VI. **Adjournment**

On a motion by W. Baker, seconded by M. Lilly the meeting was adjourned @ 2:25 p.m.

*Respectfully submitted,*

*Jeanne E. Ratfield*