I. CALL TO ORDER


Meeting called to order at 3:10 p.m.

II. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

D. Baker: The first is the adoption of the agenda and we’ve got a walk-in item from FAC to IBHE report. Anything else on the agenda? Motion to adopt?

S. Farrell: So moved.

R. Lopez: Second.

D. Baker: Great, all in favor?

Members: Aye.

D. Baker: Opposed? Thank you.

III. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF THE JANUARY 29, 2014 MEETING

D. Baker: Next is approval of the minutes and comments on the minutes? Motion to approve?

M. Theodore: So moved.
D. Baker: Second?

D. Haliczer: Second.

D. Baker: Any other discussion? All in favor say aye.

Members: Aye.

D. Baker: Opposed? All right.

IV. PRESIDENT’S ANNOUNCEMENTS

D. Baker: President’s Announcements. Well, first I just want to say a few words about our recruitment and retention activities we have underway. There were some articles in the Northern Star. I think they’re covering that well. I appreciate their conversations. I talked with them quite a bit to try and lay out where we are. We were down in enrollment this fall and so we’ve seen that cascade into the spring. The smaller fall class cascaded into the spring with what looks like typical fall to spring attrition. But those are things we can affect as we try to affect our enrollments and the university’s been declining enrollments for almost ten years now. We are, in fact, 4000 students smaller than we were ten years ago. That’s a lot of students. It’s also a lot of revenue and it’s something we’ve got to turn around.

We have incredible faculty and staff, wonderful programs, some incredible facilities. And I know Jack’s going to talk about some ideas about facilities and campus layout and whatnot here shortly but there are things we can do to improve our situation. We really have a great university and we’ve got the stuff. We’ve just got to let people know about it and then we have to really help our students be successful when they’re here. So I guess I would challenge us to do that as best we could. Retention is going to be a big deal for us and what we can do to help students stay here and be successful whether it’s advising, tutoring, financial aid, we really need to think about that between now and next fall. We’re here to help students succeed, not lower the bar, but here to help student’s succeed.

We’re also working on the conversion of our freshmen from applicant to enrolled and so if you’re asked to participate in that please take that on. We’re also reaching out to community colleges and I’ve been to a number of community colleges in the last couple months and every place I go they say thanks for coming, we really appreciate you coming by, let’s see what we can do to partner. We’re doing some innovative things with reverse articulation. Do you know that term? A couple people said no. That’s where let’s say a student leaves community college prior to their associates degree and they take some classes here. They can transfer them back to the community college and get the associates degree so that they get credit for what they’ve done. Great idea and for some students they do need to leave early because of the program, they’re here, the classes are here not there. Why hold them another semester at the community college? Go ahead and come here and transfer the credits back and get your degree done in four years. So we’re trying to do that and we’re reaching out, we’ll have three more of those coming online here fairly soon so we’re really excited about those.

There’s a whole bunch of things that we’re going to be trying to do, trying to be doing during the
coming weeks, months and years. And so all of you be thinking about how to do those. As we think about improving the university over time, one of the major tools we have is our accreditation visit. We’re now in our ten-year accreditation cycle and next week is when the Higher Learning Commission shows up. And this is an opportunity for us to really introspect about the university. We’ve done a lot of work for a number of years to create this report. And now the team will be on campus next week and they will really give us a good look and that will be the feedback that we can use to continue to improve. So I would encourage you to take that on in that vein as kind of a continuous improvement. How do we make our university better? Doris Macdonald is here today to give us an oversight from the committee and their enormous work so thank you to Doris and the committee for all of your work and I’ll turn it over to you and I guess you’ve got a mic.

A. Higher Learning Commission 2014 Reaccreditation update – Pages 3-10
Doris Macdonald, Steering Committee Chair

D. Macdonald: Thank you. Thanks to all of you for inviting me and having me on the agenda. I’m really here to sort of just give you a quick overview of where we are right now. As President Baker said, this is coming up Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, the team will be here. That’s the 3rd to 5th. I’ve got a helpful assistant here. Of course what the HLC, the Higher Learning Commission, is our accrediting body. What they’re looking for is evidence of what we’ve been doing and what we plan to do. Are we aligned with our mission and I know people are now familiar, more familiar with the mission. I think you’ve seen these around and there’s some other publicity. The mission statement, one of the things that the Higher Learning Commission is very interested in is that we do what we do speaking to the mission. That we are reflecting on our mission in all that we do. They look for continuous improvement, especially in teaching and learning, but in all our institutional endeavors.

I know some of you have been involved with this to a greater degree than others. I know that some of you have been on committees that have been helping to gather evidence. Some of you have been chairing committees; some of you have been supportive. This has been a two-and-a-half-year process preparing for this. And so I really want to say thank you to all of you who have been involved with it and all of you who have taken the time to review the report when it was available and to respond to questions and queries. This is one of the most important things we do. It’s the last time we’re going to do one of these big giant ten-year cycles because the process itself is changing which sort of is a relief for some of us. But I think one of the best things about the process changing is that we’ll be able to talk to the Higher Learning Commission every year about what we’re doing and how we are improving.

So these are some of the things they’ll be looking for. They do look for assessment of what we do. They look that we close the loop. That we look at what we’ve done, we see how well it’s worked, we improve on things we want to improve on and we celebrate the things that we’ve done quite well. They’ll be looking for evidence in the written report that’s been submitted to them and evidence that’s provided for them as well as in discussion with you.

Here’s what they do when they come (you can change that) these are the criteria that they look for. So they’re looking at these five criteria. These criteria are set by the Higher Learning Commission. These aren’t our criteria. But, in preparing for their visit, we’ve written a report that responds to these criteria.
The first one is mission, what we do here on campus is driven by our mission. The second one is integrity, ethical and responsible conduct. You’ll note that there are two criteria that reflect teaching and learning. One of the key missions of our institution, of course, teaching and learning. How we provide support for that and then also how we assess that. And finally they look for evidence of how we plan and how we integrate our planning across all university endeavors.

A little bit of the timeline here. This timeline here, now we’re punching up on March 3 to 5, but on December 19 we actually were informed of who our site team visitors were. There will be 11 of them coming. On the fourth of January we submitted a report to the site team and to the Higher Learning Commission. Throughout January we have been looking at, throughout January and February, we’ve been looking at scheduling the visit. So many of you have been sent invitations or have heard about invitations. I hope that all of you have had a chance to read the announcement that came out yesterday that said about the two open forums that will be taking place on Monday. There will be an open forum for faculty and an open forum for staff. We’ve completed an electronic resource room and well as a physical resource room. The site team will be housed here in Holmes Student Center and they’ll be doing a lot of their work and a lot of their meeting here in Holmes Student Center except for those times when they want to go out to visit a college. They show up sometime Sunday and they start their work Sunday evening and they leave by about midday on Wednesday. They have a very, very busy schedule. It means many of you will have a very, very busy schedule. I’ll thank you in advance for participating and agreeing to be part of meetings. We are a busy campus this week right before spring break, but it’s a great opportunity also to show the HLC sort of where we are and how busy and active we are.

You will probably recognize some of the names here. This was the Steering Committee that worked for two-and-a-half years to help put together the report. Each of these people, faculty members, chaired a subcommittee that went out and gathered data, found information, assessed those data, found out what we wanted to include in the report and how we could speak to the criteria that the HLC set. If you see any of these people, please thank them. You’ll notice they are coming from across campus. We had a faculty member from each of the colleges chair a steering committee. For those of you who are in the College of Education, you won’t see one of your colleagues there. We had three different chairs chairing the subcommittee that had a College of Education chair. And the reason we had three was because they were three excellent people, all of whom were recognized by places outside of this campus for their excellence and they all went on to other places. So Carol Petite to Jan Holt and Laura Luetkehans were our chairs and they’ve all been recruited out. But they were very fine participants and we’re really happy to have had them there. And, of course, all of the staff from the Office of the Provost for the past two-and-a-half years have been really pulling hard and pulling together for this. So what happens?

They show up, they start the meat of their business, they’ve already started the meat of their work which is reading the report, reviewing evidence. On Sunday when they show up they begin working together as a team. The team are 11 people. They come from all throughout the HLC region which is largely the Midwest. The team is made up of 11 people, one of whom is a university president, there’s a provost, there are a number of people, faculty members, financial officers, people in a full range of faculty and administrative positions. They will verify that what
we say we do, we do. They will judge compliance with federal law. That’s one of the main jobs of the Higher Learning Commission is to judge compliance. They will consult with us, they’ll evaluate. So they will give us not only feedback on how we’ve done things, but they will also give us feedback on where we can go in the future.

There are many, many planned meetings, there may also be spontaneous meetings. It’s often the case that as a team gets together, reviews evidence, and talks about the evidence that they’ve seen or had a couple of meeting on campus, they may decide: I think we need more information from X group. And you may be somebody who’s asked to be a participant in one of those meetings that may be spontaneous. They will also – there’s about 65 scheduled meetings. The team breaks up for their meetings. So, for example, the open forum for faculty is at 11:00 on Monday and the open forum for staff is also at 11:00 on Monday and at each of those there will be two or three of the site evaluators at those meetings.

When they are done they have a month to report back to us. They will send us a written report. We will have a period of time after that to respond to matters of fact in the report in case there’s a point of fact that we need to clarify and then the Higher Learning Commission has a board meeting in June or July where they decide on the final decision about what accreditation or not. Promod has something.

**P. Vohra:** Just a minor comment, I think they don’t like to be called consultant evaluators. The new name for them is peer reviewers.

**D. Macdonald:** Peer reviewers. Okay so I’m working on the old criteria for consultant evaluators. Okay the peer reviewers will be here. Thank you, Promod.

What you can do? Know the mission. It’s excellence and engagement in all that we do, teaching and learning, research and scholarship, creativity and artistry, and outreach and service. Commit to this. If you have not had a chance to read the self-study report, I’m sure all of you have, but just in case you haven’t, there’s also an executive summary that is posted on our web page. It’s only six pages long. Please have a look at that. That’s telling you really what the outcomes of our self study are and what we presented to the Higher Learning Commission as our outcomes. Encourage participation. If you can, get to a meeting. If you can encourage your colleagues to attend a meeting, please do. If you are in a position to release somebody from duties to attend a meeting, that would also be really, really helpful. Respond candidly to questions. When you go to open forum, the peer reviewers will have question for you and you may also pose questions or make comments for them. If they have requests, that might be a request for a meeting or request for information. Please be open and candid. And finally do show your Huskie pride. We do a lot of really good things around here. A self study is not just an evaluation of places we can improve, it’s also a celebration of what we do well and I think we want to be able to talk about all the things we do well. We have a website. That website’s been active for a while. Any information you need about the report is there. I didn’t put my e-mail address but there is hlc2014@niu.edu if you have any questions.

And I don’t know if we have time for question now, but I’m happy to entertain questions if anybody has them. I really am just really rallying you. Please show your Huskie spirit. Let’s be there. Let’s participate and I appreciate also the support you’ve given for the past two-and-a-half years as we’ve been preparing for this.
D. Baker: Any questions? No? Comments? This is a big deal. It’s a big deal for accreditation but it’s a big opportunity for us to look at ourselves. A lot of people worked hard on this. I’ve participated as a peer reviewer on a number of these over the years. One of the common flaws in these processes is that an elite group works on it and others don’t look at it and you miss the opportunity. And reviewers pick up on that. And they’ll pick up on it in the various forum that you have and whatnot. And they’ll say: So what did you think about this, think on general education. And people will look at them like, what? You got to pay attention to it. This is an opportunity for us to think about it. Look in the mirror and see what it looks like. So please go to those forums. Please look at the report. Our colleagues have done enormous work here and created a great report. I thank you, Doris, and all your colleagues for doing that.

V. CONSENT AGENDA

VI. REPORTS FROM COUNCILS, BOARDS AND STANDING COMMITTEES

A. FAC to IBHE – Sonya Armstrong – report – walk-in

D. Baker: All right, next. I guess we had the consent agenda and then on to reports from councils, boards and standing committees. I will note that the FAC has a report to the IBHE. Sonya Armstrong’s submitted a report. That’s a report only and she’s not here.

B. BOT Academic Affairs, Student Affairs and Personnel Committee – Dan Gebo and Andy Small – no report

C. BOT Finance, Facilities, and Operations Committee – Alan Rosenbaum – no report

D. BOT Legislation and External Affairs Committee – Deborah Haliczer and Rosita Lopez – no report

E. BOT Compliance, Audit, Risk Management and Legal Affairs Committee – Deborah Haliczer and Alan Rosenbaum – no report

F. BOT Ad Hoc Committee on Sponsored Research Activity and Technology Transfer – Greg Waas – no report

G. BOT – Alan Rosenbaum – no report

H. Academic Policy Committee – Sean Farrell, Chair

I. Resources, Space and Budgets Committee – Paul Carpenter, Chair –

D. Baker: No reports all the way down to I, Resources, Space and Budgets Committee and I’ll call on Paul Carpenter, Chair, Paul.

P. Carpenter: Thank you. Good afternoon everyone. In front of you in the package. You’ll have a number of different documents from the Resource, Space and Budget Committee. A couple are summations of recent meetings that we had. I’m not going to dwell on those particular reports at
this time. But if you have questions please feel free to pose them.

1. Committee meeting report – January 29, 2014 – Pages 11-17
2. Committee meeting report – February 7, 2014 – Page 18
3. Proposed Statement of Budget Priorities – Pages 19-21

P. Carpenter: What I would like to focus on, if I may, is the committee’s work on the Statement of Budget Priorities which we need to submit every year to the president. The committee has worked really hard on this and I appreciate all the time and effort they’ve put in to present this document to you today.

What I’d like to also emphasize here is that last year we passed a resolution through this body and also through Faculty Senate to encourage more active involvement of the committee in the budget process and also to provide us with more timely and relevant information. I’m very pleased to report, as is the rest of the committee, that this has been the case this year. I’d like to take this opportunity to thank President Baker, Provost Freeman, Steve Cunningham, and also I see Nancy’s not here, but Nancy Suttenfield as well, the interim CFO, for their willingness to share information with us and allow us to be active participants. I think that’s a view that’s been echoed by the entire committee and we certainly appreciate that this year.

What you have in front of you is a statement of budget priorities. To some degree we’ve taken last year’s statement and, where appropriate, we’ve reintroduced those. There are certain things here which perhaps are going to be pretty universal every year in terms of priorities for an academic institution. What we’ve tried to do this year is to provide a little bit more in the way of some specific examples within each of those particular budget points, each of those statement points based upon the information that we’ve been given.

I hope that everyone’s had a chance to take a look at this and read this and they’ve digested and have lots of feedback for us. So I would probably prefer not to go through each point in turn. We’ve tried to break this down in terms of the main groups under our title Resources, Space, and Budget. We struggle at times to figure how each of those are different from the other but we’ve done our best to try and organize those things here. We’ve also added a forth category this year which was the committee’s thoughts and feelings about how the committee as we move forward with a new fiscal model, what role the committee should play.

At this particular point in time what I’d like to do is I’d entertain any sort of questions people have about this, clarification, additions. But I’d also like to bring this forward as a motion for the UC’s approval so we can move this forward to the president in a timely manner and give him the opportunity to actually take some time to look at this and integrate this into the budget process.

D. Baker: Do we have a second for that motion?

D. Haliczer: Second.

D. Baker: Second, Deb. Then we’re open for discussion.

P. Carpenter: Open for discussion. It’s perfect.
D. Baker: Shall we call the question?

M.B. Henning: I did really appreciate that one item that was mentioned twice in the document is improving employee compensation because I think that is really important to our colleagues in this environment. But I also noticed it seemed something different this year, was the last bullet point under Resources mentions about the 6 percent rule in hiring of retirees. Could you just explain that a little bit. I’m not sure if everybody understands entirely what the intent is regarding that and your committee.

P. Carpenter: I think the committee was less focused on the specifics of that rule but the realization that the number of the aspects of the benefits that have been there in the past are changing and that perhaps we need some more creative, innovative ways of making a position here more competitive and more attractive to people. So are there ways that we can get around perhaps the legislation that we may not be able to impact, although obviously we hope in some cases that legislation isn’t passed or some of the challenges to it go through. So I think the committee, and please feel free other committee members if you want to chime in here, I think the intent here was to try and present some suggestions to the senior administration about how we may need to refocus and relook at how we put together a benefits package in terms of making an offer to people that we want to hire. But I suspect Steve could talk to very specifically the whole aspect of the 6 percent rule more eloquently than I can.

S. Cunningham: Sure, the – it’s kind of funny there are all these rules now that are percent rules. There’s a 40 percent rule, 6 percent rule, so forth and so on. The 6 percent rule actually is one that relates to charge backs that the university receives for the present value of any increases in compensation from year to year that exceeds 6 percent and what we call the final rate of earnings or the high four-year average for general formula retirements. For retirees, it’s the 40 percent rule which is the new limit that is placed upon compensation for retirees where if we pay a retiree more than 40 percent of their highest year of earnings on record with the retirement system, then we reemploy that person again, they become what’s called and “effected annuitant” and if we, stigma, and then if we rehire or any other university rehires that individual or community college, then they will get a bill for that individual’s annual annuity for that year. So it’s a disincentive to both pay people beyond 40 percent and or then rehire them. Hope that’s sufficient.

P. Carpenter: Going back to the committee discussions it was a case of over the years there’s been all sorts of ways that perhaps you can compensate people with it not maybe being a merit increase or things like that by maybe giving them additional pay in these sorts of things. Those are becoming increasingly more difficult to process because of things like the 6 percent rule. So that is an opportunity to provide maybe and trying to sort of adjust for the fact that you’re not getting the pay raises every year that we’d like and deserve, that we need to sort of take a look at those sorts of things and find other ways and other paths that we can actually recognize people for the work that they do.

D. Baker: Any other questions? Comments? Thank you, Steve. All right, are you ready for the vote? One is yes, two is no, three is abstain.

A. Rosenbaum: Anyone need more time? Can we close the voting?
D. Baker: All right, it passes. Congratulations. Paul, thank you to you and the committee. It’s been productive meetings this year. Thank you for the committee’s good work.

1 – YES – 41 votes
2 – NO – 1 vote
3 – ABSTAIN – 2 votes

J. Rules and Governance Committee – Jeff Kowalski, Chair

K. University Affairs Committee – Bill Pitney, Chair

1. Proposed Grievance Procedures for Students – Pages 22-44

D. Baker: Okay moving on. Next is University Affairs Committee, Bill Pitney, Chair. Bill.

B. Pitney: Yes, thank you. On behalf of the University Affairs Committee, I’m happy to point you to page 22 of the packet for the start of our small report on grievance procedures for students. Before I get started, I would be remiss if I didn’t mention that a large part of this was possible due to work of last year’s committee under the directorship of Kathy Coles. They really set the ground work for a lot of this. The report provides several important pieces of information for you. Number one it provides a rationale for our policy which is based on treatment of our students as well as accreditation requirements. It provides some historical background for you related to the grievance procedures for students. It also explains the process that we’ve developed on the committee. And also it presents an article for the bylaws for your consideration.

From a historical standpoint here at NIU, the issue of a student grievance policy has percolated for over ten years. Over the last several years, it’s gained a great deal of traction thanks to the work of some faculty members and particularly our student body.

I’m not going to present the entire report, but let me provide some highlights of it for you. From a rationale standpoint which you can find in Attachment A, as I mentioned before, it’s based on fair and adequate and civil treatment of our students that they certainly deserve as well as our accreditation of requirements. You’ll find in Attachment A that we did a sample of accreditation requirements for lots of different programs at the university and a large portion of them have language that speaks to the requirement of having a grievance process in place for students and for fielding student complaints and using that as part of the institutional-approved process. That’s true of the Higher Learning Commission as well as many of our [inaudible] minds.

Also for verification is a point of reference in terms of the other 12 Illinois public universities. Six of them have student grievance processes in place that address the same types of things that we’re proposing here and that goes beyond the standard and required Affirmative Action & Diversity Resource issues that are already in place that cover such things as harassment and discrimination and so forth.

In terms of the process that we’re proposing, there are some key facets I think that are worth considering. Number one, the grievance process we’ve put together requires informal steps be taken by students. This involves, where possible, the student going directly to the individual with
whom they have a complaint. And before they file a grievance formally, would require that the student also go through that individual’s immediate supervisor. For example, if it’s a faculty member they would then have to go through the chair that would allow the grievance committee or the student grievance panel a change to verify that the informal procedures have indeed taken place. The grievance may include such things, good faith claims of incivility, misuse of authority, intimidation, retaliation or professionally inappropriate acts or decisions by members of the faculty or staff of the university that adversely affects the status, the rights, the privileges of a student in a substantive way. That’s how we define an actual grievance.

There are many exclusions to this process that are worth noting. This is only for claims that are not expressly covered under other university and Board of Trustees processes. For example, we have the Affirmative Action & Diversity Resources process in place for Title IX issues [static] sexual harassment, etc. We also have a grade appeals process in place. So this policy really gets at issues pertaining to incivility that students may experience. Another exception is that the process does not apply to the level of academic rigor that faculty may expect of students, nor does it violate faculty members’ academic freedom.

I mentioned the informal steps that are required. After the informal steps are taken, if there’s no resolution, a student may choose to take this to the university level, file a formal grievance complaint and, consistent with Article 11, which is the faculty grievance process and procedures, the complaint would go to the Executive Secretary of the University Council. And the Executive Secretary would notify the respondent and get a response, connect with the grievant and respondents with a list of grievance committee members in case they need to exclude anybody from that due to conflict of interest. From there, the Executive Secretary would work with the existing grievance committee to select individuals to be part of a student grievance panel.

That panel would consist of at least one faculty member, at least one student, and that requirement would actually necessitate a change to our current construction of the grievance committee. We would have to identify 15 students to be part of that. But the student grievance panel would also include the vice president for administration or his or her designee. And at least two members on that student grievance panel would be from, would be required to be from, the respondent’s employment classification. So that way we feel like we’ve got broad representation but certainly individuals on that panel that understand an employment classification and perhaps the roles and responsibilities thereof.

Once the panel is created, a chair would be identified from within that panel and that panel would be empowered to collect additional information as needed and as necessary and, if appropriate, call an informal hearing to ask questions of the grievant and respondent. And those procedures would be in consultation with the vice president of administration or his or her designee who is on that panel as well. So we’ve got that human resources perspective on that panel.

From there the panel would weigh and consider the complaint, the evidence that’s provided and available, and testimony from folks in the event that there’s a hearing. And there are four outcomes that could result. The grievance could be denied. In other words, there’s no basis for it, for example, and it’s sustained. The matter could be referred to Affirmative Action & Diversity Resources. For example if a complaint is made but it definitely fits more a profile of a sexual harassment issue or a discrimination issue, this panel wouldn’t be the folks to oversee that. It
would have to be kicked to AADR. Another outcome would be, for example, could be referring the matter to alternative dispute resolution to have a neutral third party listen to the complaint and identify a solution that both parties would agree to. Lastly, the matter could be referred to an administrative authority with recommended action. In that instance, the panel would have listened to the evidence, examined the facts of the case and upheld the grievance. But the committee itself would not have any power. From there it would go to, for example, the individual supervisor and the supervisor’s supervisor, up the chain, so that there’s a check-and-balance there and it can’t just simply go away or be swept under the rug.

I mentioned before that the composition of the student grievance panel including a student would necessitate that we change the current construction of the grievance committee to have a pool of 15 students. I believe we’d have to work through the Student Association to identify 15 students. I think it would be necessary to have representation from each college and also have, not only undergraduate students, but also graduate students on the panel, or in the pool, excuse me.

We envision that records would be maintained by the Executive Secretary of the University Council and that each year in April, the Executive Secretary would provide the University Council with a summary report so that we have some understanding of the number of grievances filed, the dispositions, the nature of those, so that we could use that information for institutional improvement.

The draft of the article was reviewed by Jerry Blakemore, NIU’s General Counsel. Deb Haliczer and I actually met with him on February 6. There were no legal issues with the article. He did, however, have several recommendations. One was that, from a resource standpoint, due process standpoint, he suggested that we make the process such that if a student has filed a complaint using one mechanism, for example with Affirmative Action & Diversity Resources, and that complaint has run its course and it’s settled, that they not be able to use this process. In other words, once a complaint is heard in one channel, it’s done and it’s put to bed and so it’s not recycling itself and using up a lot of time and resources. So we worked in language to the document to address that.

Another recommendation was he noted that there’s likely to be some training necessary for any grievance panel. And then lastly, he suggested that we modify the preamble of this article to reflect the pillars of ethically-inspired leadership. We’re certainly willing to entertain that. When we looked at this at the [UC] Steering Committee, I thought the preamble really reflected the current constitution and kind of sets the stage for the policy. However we’ll open that up to this body if we’d like to. If you think it’s a good idea, we can certainly revisit that.

I’d like to thank the current members of the University Affairs Committee for being vibrant and active. Without you, it wouldn’t have been possible. I’d be really remiss if I failed to mention Michael Theodore, our student representative on the committee. He was instrumental in shepherding this and seeing this through the last several years. So I really thank him for his persistence, diligence and professionalism as we’ve worked through this process. So, good work, Michael. So that’s my oral portion of the report. I’m happy to field any questions.

D. Baker: So, I think procedurally this is a first reading and I think we need a motion, a second and then a discussion. We won’t have a vote this time because it’s first reading, but can we entertain a motion? Greg?
G. Long: So moved.

K. Thu: Second.

D. Baker: So, off we go.

K. Thu: Bill needs a lot of praise for all the work he’s put in on the committee. He’s been a terrific leader and collegial shepherd for all of us. I just want to say a few words about why I think this is important. I think a number of us on the committee – faculty, staff and students alike, mostly faculty – initially approached this with a healthy degree of skepticism. We asked questions about: Do we really need to create this? Aren’t there existing processes? Isn’t this going to encroach on academic freedom and aren’t students going to use this to try to change the standards and rigor in the classroom? Are we going to be flooded with a barrage of frivolous complaints? – and all good questions. And through all of that discussion, I think that most, if not all of us, agree that, yeah this is something we do need.

I had occasion a couple of years ago to deal with a small group of students who were suffering from just this problem, that is being treated poorly and uncivilly. And there was no process in place to figure out in what way to turn. Now I’m not going to go through the details of that case, but in the end those students left the university. Three of them did. And they left without finishing their degree. So in a very real sense this is a retention and recruitment issue. It goes hand-in-hand with what the president is trying to get us to focus on. Do I think that happens a lot? No not really. If you read the report, the previous ombudsman says maybe up to ten cases a year. So it’s unlikely we’re going to get barraged with these things. But I think those numbers belie the impact. I think when you think about those students who experienced this sort of thing, they go back and they tell their parents. They tell their friends. And their parents and their friends tell their parents and their friends and so on and so forth. So the ripple effect is greater than it might seem. I think more importantly than the actual details of the process is the signal that we send to students, both current and potential, which is: Yes we are going to treat our students with dignity and respect in the same way that we treat our colleagues in a collegiality process.

I want to also commend the students on the committee, Michael in particular, for shepherding us through the process as well because that signal needs to be a part of our approach in our institutional and dynamic culture going forward. I’m very happy to have been part of this committee and it’s one of the most important things I’ve done on my six years on the University Council.

D. Baker: Thank you. Others?

D. Munroe: I also want commend the committee for their work on this process which I think has gone on longer than I’ve been here and also because our program, meaning nursing, the accreditation body does look for this type of policy. And so we’re pleased to see that’s there. I did have a couple of questions though that were raised from the document and would appreciate just some clarification. I understand based on your verbal report, that it appears that the main issue that this grievance process is to address has to do with incivility towards students and I guess I just wanted to clarify that students, does this policy apply to academic policies that are developed by the faculty governance process? In other words, if students are dissatisfied with the
academic policies that a program or a department might develop, can the grievance process be used for that? Curriculum decisions that are made through the faculty governance process which includes issues related to standardized testing, progression and those types of things. Individual teaching practices which I see is in 22.3.2, you talk about rigor, but it’s sort of I guess maybe greater clarification of what does rigor mean in terms of what the faculty member is entitled to do with his or her course. And then lastly, academic freedom by either individual faculty or program faculty as a group meaning again the faculty governance process. And then the last question is, is this to be assumed that it’s one student filing a grievance towards one person whether it be staff or faculty or is it also to be used if a group of students wants to file a grievance against either one faculty member or one staff member or an entire program faculty. So that’s all we’re asking.

B. Pitney: Thank you. Those are some great questions. Your first question related to would an academic policy that disenfranchised student, for example, if a student didn’t meet a minimal requirement that’s part of an academic policy and they had to retake a class, redo a clinical, etc. and no I don’t see this applying to that. I think as long as that policy is available and students are made aware of that, then I don’t see that being an actionable grievance in the spirit of this policy. If any of the committee members would like to chime in that’s…Does that answer your question?

D. Munroe: About the academic policy yes.

B. Pitney: Your second question related to curricular decisions that would be made. Can you give me an example of…

D. Munroe: Well let’s say standardized testing that are put in various points throughout the curriculum that can have an effect on a student’s grade in terms of passing a course or can affect their progression in the program because if they don’t pass the course because they don’t do well on this test then it could affect progression.

B. Pitney: Yeah, I guess I would see that as being part of academic policy and if that’s made clear to the students that that’s one of the steps in insuring their competency and proficiency then this would not apply.

You had a question pertaining to rigor. How do we define rigor? That’s a tricky one for me. I just had a flashback of an article I read that was titled “Give me Rigor or Give me Mortis.” It was a great article on why we need high standards for students and while students may not appreciate that at one level, it sometimes comes full circle and they realize the importance of it later in their careers. I think when we wrote this policy, what we were thinking of is for example a master’s thesis student or a doctoral dissertation student being required to make edits and updates and we’ve sometimes seen how students struggle with those sorts of things and for me and for us, I don’t know if I can speak for the entire committee, but it’s that sort of thing. We’ve got to have standards and we have to have some accountability and sometimes that means a faculty member has to do due diligence to insure that those are met. In the spirit of this policy, I would see the panel asking about why there were issues pertaining to that and why the student wasn’t able to move forward, etc. Honestly I could see where if that was the case that it might be denied as a grievance. Jeff?
J. Kowalski: Yes as I looked at that section I wondered about it too. It might be amended perhaps to be worded “the level of academic performance and rigor” or words to that effect. But beyond that, the university constitution does mention that academic standards and policies are an area of faculty predominance at this university and I think in light of governance, language in our constitution and specifically with regards to that being mentioned in the Faculty Senate, its charge and duties that I don’t think that that would become an issue in that case.

B. Pitney: Thank you, that’s a good suggestion too to modify the subtitle there, “academic rigor and performance.” Thank you.

D. Baker: Are there others?

D. Block: Again, I appreciate, I think it’s a very thoughtful document and I commend the committee. Another question that came up in some leadership meetings in my college had to do with how you perceive that people that are less than 12-month appointments will be able to handle this. The work that’s defined, but with the timeline we’re wondering does that mean nobody can grieve at the end of spring semester thinking that anything’s going to happen over the next months. I don’t know if it needs to have different wording in it, but I was just wondering what you were thinking about. How that’s going to be handled.

B. Pitney: If I understand your question or comment it pertains to somebody who is not on a 12-month contract and whether or not they could be a respondent at a given point in time over the summer. And the way the wording works, we use work days in this policy, by definition, folks who are on a 9-month contract would not be held accountable to do the summer types of issues with the policy. So you know depending upon when a formal grievance was filed and the process that unfolds, like even the faculty grievance process, you could come to a point where you can’t get the information you need in terms of a fact finding aspect on the panel or call the hearing because folks aren’t on contract. And so I think that holds true for the, correct me if I’m wrong Deb, but that holds true for the faculty grievance process as well. Those are some things that are a little bit out of our control. We felt that the time line that we put together was about as reasonable as we could make it in terms of duration and still being respectful to individuals’ time to respond to a grievance if you’re a respondent, have the Executive Secretary pull the panel together, train the panel, hear the facts if a hearing needs to be called, etc. So we felt like it was as expeditious as possible but we understand that that would certainly be a problem if we got to that point. I would assume that things could pick up where they left off at the beginning of the next contract. I’m looking at Deb to help bail me out here. I got a thumbs-up so I think that’s how that would work.

D. Block: Thank you.

B. Pitney: You’re welcome.

D. Baker: Anything else on this first reading?

J. Kowalski: My other comment was to address a specific issue raised but I’d also like to simply congratulate this committee for the excellent work that’s been done putting this document together and I certainly think it speaks well even though it’s been a long process of the good will and the intentions to see a successful student grievance policy through conclusion at this point.
And one other thing I’ll mention but it’s very small, when you review this again and you’re in 22.11.1 at least when I printed it out, under the definition of complaint it ends inconclusively. I think it should as described in section 22.3 for some reason there’s a gap in mine. I don’t know if it’s in your copy or not.

**B. Pitney:** Thank you we’ll look at that.

**D. Baker:** Good catch. Deb.

**D. Haliczer:** I would like to step out of my role as a member of the committee and comment on behalf of Human Resources and Affirmative Action & Diversity Resources the wonderful collaboration and patience of the entire committee, our students, and especially Bill on listening to the concerns that HR raised about the technicalities of investigations and hearing boards and we felt very happy that our concerns were honored, respected and we came up with some collaborative solutions and we’re really pleased. Thank you, Bill and committee. And I also am very happy as the SPS Council person to acknowledge the need for training in preparation and support for hearing boards. I get very uncomfortable at hearing boards going forth to make really important decisions about grievances without having enough guidance and reassurance and so I appreciate that being part of the policy.

**D. Baker:** All right, great thanks. Alan did you have some comments?

**A. Rosenbaum:** Yes, I just have a couple of comments. One is that we will be doing some wordsmithing on that so if people find things that need to be addressed, there are a few that we’ve picked up already. Those are just typos and things like that so we’ll fix those. We probably shouldn’t necessarily refer to it as Article 22, especially Northern Star people, since we will have to find some placement in the constitution for it. It might more appropriately go after Article 11 so it may become Article 12. That has nothing to do with the content of it so that’s just where we end up putting it.

And the last thing, I want to remind the body that this being an amendment, a bylaw change, that in order to pass it at the next meeting, we will need two thirds of all voting members of the University Council. Now there have been many times in the past when we are very tight on that. Right now, we need 41 voting members voting yes in order for us to pass this at the next meeting. So I want to really encourage people to make sure you’re at the meeting. That we will try to move this up because I know we start to lose some people towards the end of the meeting. We’ll move it up as best we can, but please try to make sure that you’re here and encourage your colleagues that aren’t perhaps here today to make sure that they are here because otherwise it only takes one or two negative votes to kill the bylaw. So I think we have strong support for this from all constituent groups and we’d hate to see this go down after the amount of work that has gone into and the amount of time because we don’t have enough people in the room to pass the bylaw change. Students get your 16 members here and please encourage members that may not here to make sure they come and they stay through the meeting so that we have the votes that we need.

**D. Baker:** Anything else?

**D. Munroe:** I just have one other question for the committee on the same lines. Do you think it
would helpful to list in that section related to exceptions the verbiage either from the constitution that talks about academic policy and curriculum decisions are within the purview of the faculty? I don’t know exactly how the words are, or some such to be clear about that those types of things are not part of this grievance process. And the only reason I raise that is because the one thing that I have found over the years to be incredibly helpful in our grading policy or the grievance policy for grading, is the fact that it specifies very clearly these are the three criteria that need to be met to some degree to file a grievance because it’s helped in many cases for helping a student understand what they can contest and what they really can’t.

B. Pitney: I think that’s an excellent suggestion. My reaction is yes, I don’t see any reason we couldn’t include that language in there. If there are any members present from the committee who oppose that, let us know. I’ll certainly follow up with the committee and see how we can infuse that into that exceptions area.

D. Baker: All right, good. Mike, do you want to say anything?

M. Theodore: I mean I’d say from a policy standpoint on this and I’ve seen over the past three years about three to four different copies of what’s in front of you right now that has changed so often and I really do want to commend Bill Pitney for taking in everyone’s input and turning it into a document that addresses pretty much every concern we’ve heard over the past three years. And I mean in many ways it’s really hard to describe the amount of excitement on our end as we are to see this happening and this has been a long time in coming and to see it happen by the end of this year I think is a really commendable objective I think we can get done. So yeah I definitely want to thank Bill Pitney for everything that’s gone into this. It means a lot to the student body.

A. Rosenbaum: And you’ll be able to graduate in peace.

M. Theodore: And I’ll be able to graduate in peace.

D. Baker: That’s a good thing. Well, Bill, thank you and thanks to the committee.

L. Student Association – Jack Barry, President – report

D. Baker: Well, let’s stay with the students. Jack Barry, President of the Student Association, Jack.

J. Barry: Hi guys. I’m real excited for the remainder of this semester. We have a lot planned as a student association starting with tonight. We’re going to root on the men’s basketball team, try to cheer them on so they can host the first round of MAC tournament. We’re hoping for that. We’re going to be doing a drawing for an X-Box, one tonight. So a student’s going to walk out with that and I know a couple other student groups are going to be doing a drawing for a couple scholarships so that will be exciting to see.

We had our informational nights for next year’s E-board Monday and Tuesday. We had 32 students show interest in the four executive spots which is awesome. That number is usually anywhere between eight to 12 students, so to see 32 come pick up a packet was exciting. So we’re looking forward to a competitive election in the next month.
We have the Student Choice Awards coming up along with the on-campus job fair. We also have the cultural fest which is going to be like a Taste of Northern as soon as the weather warms up a little bit. So that will be exciting. And then one of the student favorites is the Unity Stroll competition where we kind of bring together all the different cultures and we do a little stroll competition so I’m looking forward to that as well.

What I’m most excited about, though, is what Dr. Baker mentioned in the beginning of his report, is with kind of the Master Campus Plan Thesis and how are we going to explain that to the students and let them give their input. So we have blocked off the art gallery downstairs for the first two weeks after spring break. So we’re going to be opening up on March 18 and then we’ll close right at the end of the month there. And basically students will have the opportunity to come into the art gallery and see all the plans laid out and give their input. Our staff will be there from 9 in the morning until 9 at night and students can just kind of come in – faculty and staff are invited as well – and kind of voice their opinion. And then we’ll pass all that information on to you so we can kind of see what our students want to see and what they’re most interested in.

So that’s kind of what we have going on for the remainder of the year and then I’d just like to close by seconding what everyone said about the grievance policy. I had the pleasure to be in Dr. Long’s class and yesterday in lecture he brought it up and said make sure you guys send over good vibes at 3:30 tomorrow because this was originally brought up 13 years ago. And to see it being read today is awesome for a student’s standpoint. Thanks again for everyone who make that happen.

D. Baker: Better late than never. Hey, Jack, can faculty and staff come down to the gallery and comment too or do you want just students there?

J. Barry: Faculty and staff are more than welcome as well.

D. Baker: Great and so that will be down by the hotel desk in the glassed area there?

J. Barry: Yep.

D. Baker: Okay great. It will be interesting. It’s kind of fun to go look and fanaticize about what we could be. I’m looking forward to that.

M. Operating Staff Council – Andy Small, President – report – Page 45

D. Baker: All right Andy for the Operating Staff Council.

A. Small: Good afternoon, everyone. We had a very lively meeting. We started out with a discussion of our HLC application and such. I took to heart your comment, Dr. Baker, about how sometimes this particular situation is lost on potentially the staff. And in that comment I would encourage all of us to get staff to participate in this celebration of what we’re doing here. It’s very difficult sometimes when you’re working down in the trenches on a day-to-day basis to understand what’s going on, all the different things that are happening here. It’s up to the rest of us to make sure that we get staff people involved in that situation and I truly would appreciate
anybody’s help with that that you could.

Nancy Suttenfield was our guest speaker of the day. We also had the privilege of having the SPS Council members join us for that presentation. Those of us who have seen Nancy’s presentation obviously understand a very, good insightful way of looking at our finances.

A couple of things that were brought forward on the staff concerns, we always are interested in how the accounting and procurement procedures work here at NIU. Did I say that politically correctly? Anything that we can do to encourage how that procedure works would be appreciated. Sometimes it’s nuances with the state, sometimes it’s nuances with auditors, sometimes it’s nuances with new people involved. But the fact of the matter is we’re all interested in making sure that we take a good look at accounting and procurement and see what we can do to make that process more user friendly.

The second thing that we took a look at was we’ve got this interesting policy that at the end of the year, if you have any money left, you need to spend it. There’s not rainy day fund. There’s not carry over for big expenses. The state has this concept of use-it-or-lose-it type thing and that’s always an interesting concept to us who try and save for a rainy day or save for those extra expensive things that can’t be purchased on a year to year basis. If there’s some way to take a look at that process, the staff I think was interested in that. And I’ll defer to Debbie and her comments because the SPS Council was also there that day, so I’ll let her talk about that in her report.

The other thing I wanted to talk about, this is award season. I think the Emmys are up or what is it? Yeah whatever awards I don’t know. I don’t follow those. But I do follow the awards here at NIU and those awards are important to us. They should be important to everybody sitting in this room and everybody on campus. The reason I say that is because compensation, you took a look at the Resources, Space and Budget report and the second thing noted on there was compensation. And compensation is tough and benefits are tough and the weather is cold and spring break is a long way away and all these things are worrying on people, so if you have the opportunity to nominate somebody, the deadlines are like this Friday. So you’ve got to get on the stick if you’re not on the stick already. Make sure you try and nominate somebody for an award and if you can’t do that, thank you goes a long way sometimes, working with your colleagues, working with the staff, working with the students who come through our offices and stuff. It doesn’t have to be a nomination for an award. It can simply be a recognition of a job well done. On behalf of the staff, on behalf of your colleagues, if you can think about that and do that on a somewhat regular basis, that would be truly appreciated too. With that I conclude my report and I’ll take any questions if you have any.

**D. Baker:** Any questions for Andy? Hearing none I will just note that I’ve heard your two comments and will talk to Nancy about both those issues. I know she’s already thinking about them.

**N. Supportive Professional Staff Council – Deborah Haliczer, President** – [report](#) – Page 46

**D. Baker:** Deborah.

**D. Haliczer:** Yes, thank you. I second what Andy said. We appreciated going to his meeting and
hearing about the budget principles. And my folks were very excited about these things, especially the idea that you can save money for major expenses. We certainly support that.

We invited Operating Staff Council to the SPS Council meeting to hear the report on the Higher Learning Commission and the work that we all have to do in supporting that mission.

And we also heard an excellent report by Tom Phillips who is our police chief. And my council was very concerned about campus safety and perceptions of safety on campus and he gave us some excellent comments about that. We were very impressed.

Awards season you can read my report. When I wrote this I could not tell you the names of the people who received the four presidential awards because we hadn’t notified them yet, but I will tell you that Steve Estes from Liberal Arts and Sciences Advising; Dana Gautcher from the Office of Student Academic Success; Kate Maley, History and Social Studies Teacher Preparation Programs; and Jeanne Meyer from Community Standards and Student Conduct will get the four presidential awards on April 15 at our ceremony. Lesley Gilbert of Human Resources, our secretary of SPS Council gets the service award. We have selected 31 individuals to receive certificates of recognition but I won’t tell you their names because they don’t know it yet. And we have five new awards which I described briefly here. Those individuals have not yet been informed. President Baker chuckled with me at the amount of awards we give out from SPS Council and I say that our council is very much into morale boosting so you’ll hear about all of those later.

D. Baker: You go, Deborah. Any comments for Deborah? Thank you. You want to move on to benefits?

O. University Benefits Committee – Deborah Haliczer, Chair; Therese Arado, FS-Committee on the Economic Status of the Profession Liaison – report – Pages 47-48

D. Haliczer: Okay, moving from the exciting topic of recognition and morale contributions, let’s talk about the Benefits Committee. The Benefits Committee, you have my lengthy report. Do come to the vendor event on Tuesday next week between ten and two at the Capitol Room to speak with the remaining 403B vendors. We’ve reduced the number and the Benefits Committee is happy that Human Resources has appropriately informed all individuals who are now grandfathered and can continue contributions but we will not invite new participants.

The biggest issue, of course, on the plate of the Benefits Committee is pensions and we have an extraordinary degree of interest, how’s that for a mild statement, in the issues of pensions. I’ve diagnosed it as generalized institutional pension anxiety. I’m a mental health person and I diagnose these things. So when the communication went out about pension appointments, I did contact SURS yesterday. They were all taken by mid-afternoon of the first day that that was open. The Webinar that SURS is giving, they’ve advertised three of them that came out in our mailing in HR, and the first of the Webinars is all booked up. How do you book up a Webinar so no more people can come? But I am not a technical person. So there are two more left. Pension appointments are going quickly. We have been in HR directed vehemently not to be giving pension counseling from Human Resources because of the changes. And so the Benefits Committee will be meeting next week and you know what we will be talking about is pensions
and what to do about it. What can I say?

**D. Baker:** So your recommendation is to go sign up for a counselor Webinar ASAP.

**D. Haliczer:** Yes, act fast because if the Webinars if the first one booked up would shock me, there are two more that have been scheduled. What I’m directing everyone to do is contact SURS. I had several conversations with SURS yesterday myself talking about the various issues and did some there. I understand how stressed you are, SURS counselors, but please make sure there are enough appointments available for our people. So do it quickly, call SURS, they can see you in Naperville at certain times; phone appointments are available by many people or you can go to Champaign. But if I were you and you have an interest in retiring anytime soon, I would call SURS.

**D. Baker:** Good. Questions for Deborah? Yes.

**J. Kowalski:** And to add to that, I’d just like to express my appreciation to Steve Cunningham for the recent post that he sent out to the university community that gave some more specifics regarding these pension issues and directed us to a link where we could see how it affects members of the community and particularly for some of the people who are in the money purchase group. Thank you very much for that and if you missed that in your e-mail take a look at it.

**D. Baker:** Thanks, Deborah.

**D. Haliczer:** One more item, if you go to the SURS website (which many of us of do quite often) and look to the estimator function, it has been disabled temporarily. Don’t panic, that doesn’t mean that there’s too much activity. I think what they’re doing now is programming it to reflect the changes in the pension I’m hoping. But right now it is not available for you to do your own estimate.

**D. Baker? :** Anybody else? Okay, put it on speed dial.

P. Elections and Legislative Oversight Committee – Abhijit Gupta, Chair

**VII. UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

**VIII. NEW BUSINESS**

**IX. COMMENTS AND QUESTIONS FROM THE FLOOR**

**X. INFORMATION ITEMS**

**D. Baker:** Moving on I wanted to bring your attention to, under X. A., a policy change addressing the issue of the D grade and transfer of course work. We’ve been out of compliance with the Illinois Articulation Initiative Agreement that allows transfer of completed Illinois transferable general education core curricula and that dealt with the acceptance of the D grade, d as in dog. And so according to the statewide agreement, we do in fact need to accept that and I wanted to bring that to your attention so you knew what the playing field was now. I don’t know
if that’s the cheery note to end on. Any comments or questions for the assembled?

A. **Policy change** addressing the issue of “D” grades in transfer course work – Pages 49-50
B. **Minutes**, Academic Planning Council
C. **Minutes**, Admissions Policies and Academic Standards Committee
D. **Minutes**, Athletic Board
E. **Minutes**, Campus Security and Environmental Quality Committee
F. **Minutes**, Committee on Advanced Professional Certification in Education
G. **Minutes**, Committee on the Improvement of Undergraduate Education
H. **Minutes**, Committee on Initial Teacher Certification
I. **Minutes**, Committee on the Undergraduate Academic Experience
J. **Minutes**, Committee on the Undergraduate Curriculum
K. **Minutes**, General Education Committee
L. **Minutes**, Honors Committee
M. **Minutes**, Operating Staff Council
N. **Minutes**, Supportive Professional Staff Council
O. **Minutes**, Undergraduate Coordinating Council
P. **Minutes**, University Assessment Panel
Q. **Minutes**, University Benefits Committee

**XI. ADJOURNMENT**

**D. Baker**: Hearing none, I would be happy to entertain a motion.

Meeting adjourned at 4:25 p.m.