OPENING: The meeting was called to order by D. Wade, Chair.

I. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

Approval of the agenda was moved by D. Wade; agenda approved.

II. ELECTRONIC APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. The minutes from the December 1, 2004, meeting of APASC were electronically approved.

III. OLD BUSINESS

A. Change in Grading Process - What’s next?

A general discussion of the advantages and disadvantages of an incremental grading system took place. The following is a summary of the key points, suggestions, advantages, and disadvantages of the various proposals.

- Any change in the grading system should consider plus grades only. Minus grades may disadvantage high-end students in that an A- cannot be offset with an A+. C- grades may disadvantage students performing at the margins in that it may drop them below a 2.0 average. Plus grades would raise a grade but not reduce a grade. Plus grades would allow a faculty member to recognize the high end of a grade level but not punish the student.

- Most changes in grading systems at other universities were initiated because of concerns about grade inflation. Grade inflation is not a motivating factor at NIU. The mean grade between 1984 and 2003 only fluctuated .2 of a point. Mean grades for general education classes have varied only slightly over the last five years. It was generally agreed by the committee members that grade inflation is not a problem at NIU.

- There was a discussion as to whether plus grades would inflate mean grade point averages at NIU. Plus grades are still a half step grade existing midway between one grade and another. There was a question as to whether a D+ grade might be given instead of a C-. The C grade is becoming a defacto
minimum passing grade through the implementation of prerequisite policies requiring a minimum grade of C.

- There was a concern about the impact of plus grades on limited admission programs. If the plus grades actually inflated GPA's that would require limited admissions programs to further raise the GPA requirement for entry into the program.

- There was discussion about the grades in courses where grades are determined subjectively as opposed to objectively. In courses where grades are determined numerically it may be easier to determine fine distinctions in grades but in courses where grades are given subjectively there was some concern as to whether finite distinctions can be made.

- There was a discussion as to whether the grading system can be consistently applied considering the different ways in determining grades. Student surveys indicate that there is great concern about consistent application of grading policies. There was concern that an incremental grading system would further magnify this problem.

There followed a discussion as to what steps to take next related to this issue.

- One suggestion was to write a memo to the student advisory committees forwarding the grade system charts for different grade systems plus a summary of the discussion and data collected by APASC.

- Unless there is a strong feeling for changing the grading system on the part of APASC, one suggestion was to send the proposal back to the University Council with a list of questions that need to be answered. The concern was that the proposers of this change have not investigated the core issues and these have not been addressed.

- Delay of consideration is not a problem because the student information system changes that would need to be accomplished to implement the system would not be ready for at least three years.

- There appears to be some level of faculty support for some sort of incremental grading system. There is a need to gauge student support beyond the Student Association. The Student Association has gone on record as being opposed to any change.

- There appears to be no consensus on what direction the committee should take, except that it is generally agreed that we should not do something that would be negative for students. But there are a number of issues that need to be addressed.

- We do not have an overwhelming reason for making the change and we need a better rationale than we have currently for making any change.

- Any change will not be free in terms of implementation. It will cost money to make any change to the grading system.

It was moved by D. Wade, seconded by J. Parker to develop a document suitable for polling student organizations for input on this issue. This document would summarize the data we have collected to this date and offer a limited number of options for consideration. Motion passed.
B. Undisclosed Prerequisites

D. Wade distributed a handout proposing language changes for the Academic Policies and Procedures Manual related to the disclosure of course prerequisites. A summary of the discussion follows.

• There was a question as to who considers the prerequisite course essential for success. Would this be the department or the individual instructor? The response was that the curricular process would be responsible for determining whether a course was essential. The wording in the proposal would give the deans a policy to back them up if they needed to overrule the faculty member regarding an undisclosed prerequisite.

• E. Seaver outlined a scenario that illustrated how undisclosed prerequisites negatively effect students. He gave the example of a student who is enrolled for 12 hours. The syllabus for the class is distributed late and lists a previously undisclosed prerequisite for the course. The student then drops the class but it is too late at that point to add another. Because the student is enrolled in less than 12 hours at that point the student then loses financial aid and needs to drop out of school.

• It was suggested that the phrase “should be listed” be changed to “must be listed”. This would give the department chair more leverage in discussions with faculty members.

Any correspondence with departments would include a section inviting departments to review their prerequisites.

It was pointed out that if prerequisite are in the catalog the registration system will prevent a student from registering for the class in the first place, eliminating the first day of class scenarios where students are surprised about undisclosed prerequisites.

**It was moved by D. Wade to approve the document with the wording changes from “should” to “must”. Motion passed.**

IV. NEW BUSINESS

A. By-Laws Change

E. Seaver reported that with the new Academic Advising Center coming on-line, a number of changes need to be made in the catalog to permit processes previously done by the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences to be applied to deciding students. Deciding students are those students with no major and no college and are advised by the Academic Advising Center. These changes would effect the review and exceptions of academic policies for these students.

In those cases where the catalog referred to the dean or the dean’s designee these would refer to the vice provost or the vice provost’s designee.

Examples of the policies that are affected would be things such as the dismissal review at the end of the semester and university withdrawals. The parallel for the colleges would be the college reinstatements committee. There needs to be a faculty body to review these cases for deciding students. The Advising Deans proposed APASC as the reinstatement committee for this group of students. The
committee would not need to review all students who are up for dismissal but only those students who were at the borderline.

If the committee is open to consideration for participation in this process E. Seaver will draft language for the catalog that would include APASC as a participant in this process.

B. Reinstatement Reports

D. Wade reported that all colleges have now submitted reinstatement reports and these have been included in the packet with the agenda.

It was moved by D. Wade to receive these reports. Motion passed.

C. Nursing Changes

D. Wade reported that the School of Nursing had submitted a change to their retention requirements from allowing one semester to achieve a 2.5 GPA to allowing two semesters to achieve that GPA. Since this was actually a loosening of the requirements there was no objection on the part of the committee.

It was moved by D. Wade to approve the change by Nursing from the October 22, 2004 College of Health and Human Sciences Curriculum Committee minutes for page 155, column II, Undergraduate Catalog. Motion passed.

It was moved by R. Blecksmith to adjourn the meeting, seconded by D. Wade. Meeting adjourned.

Minutes submitted by Don Larson.