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

I. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

It was moved by D. Wade, seconded by P. Hartman to adopt the agenda. Motion passed.

II. ANNOUNCEMENTS

A. Electronic Approval of Minutes (12/08/11)

B. Report from Advising Deans

M. Pritchard indicated that students retained on academic probation are now able to re-enroll within twelve months instead of having to re-enroll the next semester. This is not a catalog change but all the colleges are changing their dismissal letters. This new change gives the students a little more flexibility.

M. Pritchard also stated that a huge number of college reviews where students do not meet admission standards are being sent to the colleges for review. The deans have asked that these specially admitted students not be allowed to change their majors within their first year at NIU. E. Seaver stated that for undecided majors there are no director reviews.
J. Wolfskill asked how a department would know that a particular student was blocked from changing their major. M Pritchard stated there would have to be a service indicator for these students blocking the request for a major change.

III. OLD BUSINESS

A.

IV. NEW BUSINESS

A. College Reinstatement Reports for 2009-2010

D. Wade moved to accept the college reinstatement reports. P. Hartman seconded. Motion carried.

B. Proposed Catalog Language Change/Addition – “Attendance”

See attachment

R. Holly presented the proposed catalog change dealing with attendance. He stated that many students represent the university off campus from athletes to musicians at university sponsored events which results in an absence from class. At times faculty have penalized these students for missed attendance. This policy states that the instructor must provide a reasonable attempt to accommodate students involved in these university sponsored events resulting in an absence.

D. Changnon stated that a student involved in an official college event should be allowed to make arrangements with their instructor to make up the work missed for that day. He gave an example of an instructor allowing one missed quiz results in a “0” and doesn’t count against the student for any absence. He stated that some instructors are saying the student can use that option even though their absence is university related. He stated that they should be allowed to make other arrangements with their instructor.

E. Seaver stated that advisors are going to avoid putting a student in a class that conflicts with scheduled activities. The second sentence in this proposed language states, “It is recommended that students avoid registering for classes in which they would amass significant absences.”

D. Changnon said this language is parallel to the language used for religious observations.
J. Wolfskill stated that for the vast majority of classes this policy language would be fine, but for specialized courses such as student teaching and clinical it is not. He stated that students registered for student teaching are aware of their commitment and that accommodations could not be met.

P. Hartman stated that the state requires a minimum of hours in their student teaching. So if a student is absent for any reason they must make up the hours to meet the state requirement.

**D. Wade moved to accept the proposed catalog language regarding attendance. M. Pritchard seconded. Motion carried with one abstention.**

C. Faculty Senate Recommendation to Adopt a Plus/Minus Grading System

D. Wade said that this recommendation was before APASC to decide on and then forward on to the UCC to make the final decision.

D. Wade said this was approved by Faculty Senate. He said that each faculty senate member was to go back to their department for a vote. The vote from the faculty senate was overwhelmingly in support of the plus/minus grading system.

D. Wade asked if APASC had enough information to make a decision and if not what information was needed and from whom.

E. Seaver said that MyNIU is delivered with a plus/minus grading system which the college of law already uses. The cumulative GPA can never be above a 4.0 but the semester GPA could be higher than 4.0 with the plus system.

D. Wade said that an advising dean had asked how we are going to cope with student complaints. The proposal before APASC is not a mandatory system. It is a system that allows a faculty member to use plus, minus, neither or both as they see fit. The advising dean’s concern was that in a multi-sectioned course staffed by multiple instructors, student complaints may be generated because they could have had a higher grade if they had a different instructor that used the plus/minus grading.

E. Seaver said that this grading system is not optional. There will only be one grading system. However, a faculty member may chose not to use the plus or minus.

M. Pritchard said that the plus/minus grading system could severely affect students trying to get into specific programs.

E. Seaver stated that if this grading system is implemented there would be a whole series of questions to be answered.
Does a “C” or better mean “C” or “C-”?  
If the pre-requisite is a “C” or better and a student receives a “C-”, has the student met the pre-requisite?  
If a “C-” does not meet the requirement, can the “C-” be repeated?

J. Wolfskill stated that he felt the plus/minus grading system had the potential to do a great deal of harm. He feels the potential benefit of this system is largely aesthetic and emotional. He stated that the potential cost is serious and real, but at this point unknown.

D. Wade stated that the number one reason that students are not for the plus/minus grading system is that the 4.0 students could lose that GPA with an “A-”. He stated that the “A+” could off-set the “A-”. He also stated that the real problem is not the plus/minus system, but the minus system. If just the plus system was incorporated we would only aid the students. There would no longer be the “C” or better problem. This would eliminate many problems and the “A-” issue for the top students. He stated that he is more motivated to award the plus to a good student than a minus to a marginal student.

J. Wolfskill stated that the existing letter grades are defined in the existing undergraduate catalog. He asked if anyone on the Faculty Senate or Academic Affairs Committee has proposed definitions for the added plus and minus grades.

E. Seaver said that would be a catalog change and the verbiage would need to be decided on.

S. Eaton suggested that APASC get a list from M. Pritchard and the advising deans of all the points in the catalog that would have to be changed on the basis of the proposed grading scale. She suggested that this list then be sent to the Faculty Senate for answers to all the concerns listed. It was also stated that the students’ position on the proposed grading system should be included.

D. Changnon stated that he felt the students needed to be informed how this could affect scholarships, admission or standing in programs. D. Wade said that these concerns can be presented by faculty to the student advisory board.

D. Wade moved that the plus/minus grading be referred to the following: Student Advisory Board, Student Association, Advising Deans and Curricular Deans with instructions to make a choice of one of the five options given in the proposal from the Faculty Senate. J. Wolfskill seconded. Motion carried.

V. ADJOURNMENT

Minutes submitted by Lisa Allison.
PROPOSED CATALOG CHANGE/ADDITION

2010-2011 NIU UNDERGRADUATE CATALOG
ACADEMIC REGULATIONS

Attendance

The university does not use a “cut” system. Each instructor decides whether to excuse class absences and determines how to permit make-up work.

If a student will be absent from classes for a week or more because of an accident, illness, or other emergency, instructors will be notified of the absence only if students or their parents request it through the Division of Student Affairs. Health Services will not release information about students unless they provide a written request.

Leaves of absence will be granted for volunteer services related to disaster relief in accordance with applicable Illinois statutes or executive orders issued by the State of Illinois in response to emergency situations. To initiate a leave of absence, students should contact their College Dean’s office, or the vice provost (or the vice provost’s delegate) for any student who has no college affiliation. Following the period of volunteer service, Registration and Records will facilitate reenrollment of the student.

Students are expected to comply with each individual instructor’s established attendance policy. It is recommended that students avoid registering for classes in which they would amass significant absences. In the case of an absence due to required attendance at a university-sponsored event such as a department trip, performing arts activity, ROTC function, or athletic competition, reasonable attempts shall be made by faculty members to allow the student to make up missed work. Students are responsible for completing the work assigned and/or due on the days they are absent for university-sponsored events. Both the sponsoring unit and the student should inform the faculty member as soon as possible in the semester in order for arrangements to be made for completing missed assignments, examinations or other required course work. The student is required to provide each instructor with an official notification in advance of the absence (e.g., a letter from the chair of the sponsoring department, the head of the sponsoring unit, or the coach).

Justification:

There are many educationally important opportunities for students that involve trips off-campus and which would take students away from their regularly-scheduled classes. In most instances, NIU faculty members have been supportive and have worked with students to allow them to complete their course work on a different schedule than the other students. However, each year there are several instances of faculty members who are not willing to adjust their established polices in order to accommodate the needs of students who are representing NIU at valuable off-campus activities. The additional proposed language will ensure that faculty members must recognize the value of these off-campus trips and allow such students to complete their work within a more flexible time frame.