The meeting was called to order at 3:05 p.m.

Two announcements were made. Purushothaman Damodaran is unable to serve the rest of his term on the University Assessment Panel (UAP). Please think about your willingness to serve on the UAP, and we will elect a representative from the APC to serve on the UAP at the next APC meeting. The 7th Annual NIU Assessment Expo will be held on Friday April 4, 2014, from 8:30-noon in the HSC Sky Room. Please join us for the expo if your schedule permits.

Every year the APC members are asked to look at the program review process and how it could be improved. Last year the Program Review Process Task Force was established. The task force was comprised of chairs who had recently written program reviews, members from the APC, college administrators, and central administrators. Some of the task force recommendations are that the guidelines should be aligned with the university mission and the program review process should be aligned with disciplinary accreditation cycles. In August 2013, the Council of Deans came to a consensus on the institutional performance metrics, but this may change moving forward. In the task force recommendations, one of the recommendations is to begin discussion with the APC as to their future role in program review and academic planning. The APC has several duties, which are related to this, including:

- To develop and implement procedures for the periodic review of academic programs in terms of their quality and their consistency with the institution’s academic mission.
- To advise the executive vice president and provost on academic priorities and strategies for the achievement of those priorities, including the establishment of priorities in budgeting.

When the HLC site visit team was here in March, they asked this group about how it sets priorities. This has not been something that the APC has done historically, but it is in the duties for the APC.

We are excited and encouraged by receiving these questions. This shows an enthusiasm for being part of the planning process. Program review is done for continuous improvement process. Program priorities are at the heart of resource allocations. This is an internal comparison. These are good questions to start this conversation and to think about the criteria. People write books about this, and it will take us a year to talk about this new process. President Baker did this process at the University of
Idaho, and it took about two years to complete. We would like the Committee on Resources, Space, and Budgets (RSB) and the APC to work together on developing this process.

The program review process started in the late 1970s. It was one of President La Tourette’s initiatives. The environment in which it was developed was very different than our environment now. NIU was part of the Board of Regents, and the IBHE was a very powerful state agency. The process was very data driven and controlling. In the 1970s and 1980s NIU was expanding and areas were identified for development. Every year we went to the BoR and the IBHE with requests for additional funding for programmatic proposals. In the 1990s the state got into a budget crisis, and the IBHE was still powerful and very intrusive. The IBHE told all the public institutions that they should eliminate some programs, and it told the institutions what programs should be eliminated. We had an arm wrestling exercise with the IBHE, and we were able to defend some of the programs it said we should cut. No one went after new money because there was no new money. Now we do not have to defend our programs to the IBHE because they are not as powerful. There are more programs now, and many of the programs have accreditation.

We are now in a different budgetary climate; there are no new funds. The governor is proposing a 12.5 percent cut, and the legislature is proposing a 20 percent decline in the budget. In addition, we heard from the HLC site visit team that the planning and assessment activities need to be linked to a budgetary process. We need this group to be able to close the loop. This is an opportunity to talk about the program prioritization process. We don’t have time to build this into the FY15 process, but we are facing opportunities and challenges due to retirements and money allocations. Last year the deans’ funds for open positions reverted back to the Office of the Provost. We are doing this again this year, and more positions will be part of this process. The president sees the RSB and APC as the second level of review. The deans will bring forward the positions and tell us what they want to do. In April, the Office of the Provost will do some prioritization of this. The APC and the RSB will look at the overall rankings to see:

- How the prioritization aligns with the mission of NIU
- How the prioritization aligns with the budget priorities of the RSB
- How the prioritization aligns with Bold Futures and Student Career Success

This information will be put forward to the president as recommendations. We would like to create more efficiencies and synergies.

What role can the APC play, moving forward, in program prioritization and resource allocation and in developing a program portfolio, including the pieces in the portfolio? Major trends have been looked at by using the PSAT (college board test), which is a widely taken test. This information needs to be disseminated and talked about. A PSAT regional representative can come and talk to us about these trends. Speaking from the role of department chair, a lot of information is provided in the program review process, but there is no strong sense of direction and what you do after the review. Some of the information provided was not the most meaningful to help the APC and the departments have conversations. The process has been streamlined a little bit. What we are getting at with this question is we see enrollment has dropped or there is a retention issue, and we don’t see anything that we can do with this. The APC can help us build a process to develop appropriate metrics or a dashboard. When developed, what you want to count and what you can easily count are not the same. When you look at the value of research, you also have to look at the value of the relationships that are created by being involved in research. How do you count this in a reasonable way? In the Vision 2020 process, ideas of benchmarking were discussed. Think about the ones that are important to NIU. When you talk about
engagement, you are talking about student and community engagement. We need a good way to assess these and what their value is. Your experiences will help us address these issues. Actually, having this group come up with metrics would be helpful. The data from Institutional Research focus on external reporting. I will have a discussion with Dan about the data he has, and we can talk about the gaps. With the combined wisdom of this group and ongoing conversations you are having, we would really benefit from your comments. Maybe some data that we have now are not necessary. We need to manage our finances with those priorities. When the HLC site visit team was here, it was clear that we do a lot of performance assessment, but planning does not occur. This would address that issue. The fact that the council hasn’t played that role is because plans were not operationalized in the budget process. The goal of strategic planning is to help you decide where to invest your money. The university needs to do this, and this will become part of our culture.

The metrics should be aligned with the state performance metrics. Right now the IBHE is using small data elements for its performance funding approach (degrees produced, retention, graduation, research/public service, and progress toward degree). These elements have different weighting factors. Extra bonus points are given for some minority groups. Now we are talking about internal improvement. There are lots of data sources available on this campus. We do need to keep our eye on performance funding. We are looking at improving the program review process and tying it to funding. We have to have metrics that we can design and use. Dashboards are easy to do, and we produce many of these data elements every year. Now we need to develop a communication system. Data from Institutional Research and a variety of other sources needs to be used because we need an institutional solution, and these data need to sync with colleges and IT. When we get focused on data, we need to consider the different audiences that will use these data.

In some of the reviews we have noticed that enrollment and credit hour production have declined and costs have increased. We know this is not a good thing, but there isn’t anything the APC can do about this.

We should identify the metrics and gather them, but the responsibility of the program is to justify this. Part of the problem for encouraging the development of metrics is that the metrics may not work well for interdisciplinary programs. You should select your criteria and then choose metrics. This group and the campus will have to think about the criteria we value. We are trying to get to this question of quality because we get pressure from external units, not programs.

How does or should the university identify and promote flagship programs? Not all programs are the same; some serve other purposes. We also need to think about programs that serve as “landing spots” for students to help them succeed in completing an NIU degree. Some programs provide high levels of service or general education courses. There are books that are written about how to approach this process, and the book I have been reading has a chapter in it that discusses interdisciplinary programs. We need to decide what criteria we will be using and then develop metrics. Consideration of interaction will need to be built into the process and criteria selection. It is easy to count credit hour production by faculty. In some cases it is okay to have credit hour production by faculty FTE be low. A program might have low credit hour production by faculty, but it is recognized for excellence; this matters. A program might have a decline in enrollment, but it is doing creative things with certificates of undergraduate and graduate study, general education, etc., that has to be weighted. The questions should start with what is important to us, how do you weigh and measure this, and then think about resources. How much value are we going to add to the process? Will we be adding data that we don’t currently have? Why are we here? The program review process is not the administration’s job, the APC’s job, the chairs’ job; it is all of our jobs. The RSB will be part of the process. We need to decide
this together. I think the reality is the program review outcomes are the only systematic information the administration really gets. This group is the obvious place to do this. Enrollment and retention is everybody’s job at NIU. We also have to use our marketing to get the word out about our programs.

The enrollment numbers do not seem to be improving. It would be helpful to understand the university plan for admissions and recruiting. How can colleges and departments work with admissions to help individual programs? This cycles back to our strategic enrollment plan. There will be a new vice president for enrollment management. Some things will be further finalized after a new person is in this position. Transfer students do provide a great opportunity for NIU and there are multiple initiatives underway to make the transition from community college to NIU easier. Traditionally, the thinking was you go to the community college and complete the first two years (general education requirements) and then leap into the major course work, but the practice is not aligned with the theory. The pathways are not clearly marketed. Students may not have taken the right prerequisites. One of the things that departments and programs could do is to work with the community colleges and align their courses with our courses. The APC can help departments and programs think about ways to structure their programs and think about if the structure is helpful to the students. There are 26 community colleges in our region, which is very high. These community colleges have been viewed as an asset in the past, but in the last few years, they have been viewed as a threat. NIU has recruited in the region a set of students who were middle class or upper working class who wanted to stay in the area. These students have been easy to recruit. The current set of students is harder hit because of the economy. We have increased tuition, and now we are less affordable than we used to be. Many of these community colleges are among the best in the country, and many have hired our graduates as teachers. It is a hard argument to make for students to start out at a four year institution given the costs. Many students will opt to go to a community college the first two years and then transfer to NIU. We don’t want to make it harder for these students to transfer into NIU. These students can’t afford to go elsewhere either. Some community colleges are trying to get students to stay for three years or trying to get authority to offer four years degrees. We have to work collaboratively with these community colleges. The ICCB reported that spring enrollment at the Illinois community colleges was the lowest it had been in a decade. We need to incentivize people in the program and give them this information, make it easy to digest, and think about this information. Statewide the community colleges have seen a 6.4 percent decline in enrollment this past year. We are competing for a larger share of a smaller pool.

Is there any talk about looking at ways to profitably downsize? Our overall financial structure has changed with state appropriations declining. We now have enrollment driven revenue. The state appropriations used to be 55 percent of our budget, and now they are 22 percent of our budget. Linking discussions of program review and enrollment has to translate into the fiscal reality for students. We depend on students to generate the revenue. How do we use the programs to bring students here and keep them here? This will be discussed at the Bold Futures workshops. Student retention and recruitment translates into student success for creating the kind of fiscal responsibility we now have. We are talking about a finite and declining pool of resources unless we can turn enrollment around. There has been a 15 percent decrease in state appropriations, and the decline in enrollment will be another 3 percent next year. We also have a lot of empty beds on campus, which are not generating revenue. There are reasons why it could be in the best interests for students to start at NIU instead of at a community college. Community colleges are our partners, but also our competitors. The first two years of general education are very important. We have a good number of applications. We need to think about what opportunities we have when students come to campus. We know where the students are, and we personalize the messages we send to them. We have recently started several new initiatives to try and increase our yield. We will track the funds ($6.5 million) used for these initiatives to see how we should proceed. We need to incentivize faculty to be involved in recruitment. The promotion and
tenure process does not encourage this. Is there a way to make this part of the process? Teaching is a
good way to retain students. If you have an active and engaged classroom, that helps with retention.
One could argue not enough weight is given to the teaching side. There are departments that teach
introductory courses and can reach students early on. Another way the APC can contribute is by
helping change what is presented by specific colleges and departments. We should look at this as an
entire institution. Veterinary programs have gone through many of these challenges already. They
combined units within the colleges. They don’t have separate departments for each area. They found
that this took fewer resources and provided more opportunities for synergies. There are a lot of creative
solutions that can be looked at. You have increased enrollment, but it also helps to save costs. We can’t
do things the way we have always done them because, if we do, we will perish.

What can the university do to help the programs promote and market their programs? Keeping web
pages updated is important. A lot of the marketing should be centralized in the institution.
Northwestern is offering a program at the College of DuPage, and they are charging the same tuition as
NIU. I really don’t think faculty should have to do recruiting, but if the opportunity presents itself, I
would hope the faculty don’t turn it down. The more current the programs are, the better the links to
businesses in the region. The northern Illinois region is the heaviest recruited area in the country. We
are working on figuring out ways to make the price more competitive. There are some advantages for
being located here. We do have a lot of alums in the area. The Business Experiential Learning Center
asked students why they came here. They were local kids who went to community colleges who came
here because of the links back to the area they cared about. Having a great student/faculty experience is
where faculty and departments can play meaningful roles and where you can see outcomes. Really this
is about the student/faculty experience. Word gets out about these types of experiences. It is a
recruiting tool too.

One thing that you will see coming is that we are an over built campus. Some buildings detract from
our beauty. We have space that will be eliminated. Think about what is important, not what we own.
Also think about where we make barriers. People don’t like moving. This is a place where you could
make a difference in the recommendations you make.

One of the retention issues is that we have lost faculty, but because of the hiring freeze, we cannot
replace them. Faculty have to teach overloads, but they don’t see the same benchmark applied to the
administrators. Is this really the right number of administrative hirings? Are you asking about
administrative position vs. faculty positions? If so, we are not hiring more administrators than faculty.
We are working with RSB to show what has been eliminated. If you look at the total number of
employees (faculty, SPS, Civil Service) and compare over the last ten years, it is more or less constant.
The hiring freeze was applied uniformly across all areas. Requests to hire go to the vice president for
the area. Some positions have been filled and others have not. My division only replaced about half of
the vacant positions. We are hiring using the temporary status because we know we will be having
retirements. I think we will be seeing major changes in the flexibility we have.

Dean Bond was asked to comment a bit at the graduate level on enrollment, recruitment, and where
things could be improved. Last fall enrollment was flat. This year the number of applications we are
tracking are at the same level as last year at this time. We have a lot of international students. For
retention, we don’t have the same issue as we do at the undergraduate level. From fall 2013 to spring
2014, our retention rate was 93 percent. If you look at a two-year cohort, the retention rate is 88
percent. We usually have a 5 percent stop-out rate for degree completing students. A lot of departments
do a great job communicating with students. The more contact you can have with students, the better.
Also, keeping the programs current helps. At the graduate level students know what they want to study.
We don’t need to reinvent the wheel, but it might be helpful to look at what other institutions are offering. For instance, look at ways to offer cell and micro biology in a creative way that doesn’t put a burden on us.

It seems like we spend so much money on the undergraduate programs, but we are seeing specific results at the graduate level. Should we move more towards graduate programs? These programs have good retention, and these students are easier to target. Should we move 10 to 15 percent more of our resources to graduate programs? The population of employed students who want additional education has gone up, but this varies by discipline. The demand for an undergraduate business degree offered at night is very high. One of the neat things about our jobs is that we get to benchmark; we ask what institutions are our peers, what we want to be comparable to, and what institutions are aspirational and competitive.

We also need to think about how we are going to communicate with an increasing diverse clientele. This will challenge us to think about our programs and how they are marketed.

Having a more robust role for the APC makes it meaningful. A one size fits all approach won’t work. When I think about a department with undergraduate and master’s programs, it is different than a department with undergraduate, master’s, doctoral, and certificate programs. These two departments would make different decisions because they are different departments. I’m not sure how to put these together. We need to think about departments more holistically. We may need to combine some departments. This council has the ability to be very instrumental. The APC will be involved with program quality, faculty, resources, etc. The APC should be involved in feedback where programs could be improved.

When we recruit students, we are very specific in our outreach, and we hope to continue to improve on this. Some students express interest in a specific program in the very beginning, and we get information from the colleges to send to these students. Lowering the admission requirements might not help with retention. We have not lowered the admission requirements. Students who don’t meet our requirements are sent to the colleges for review, and colleges make the decision regarding admissions. It doesn’t do us any good to admit students who can’t complete the programs.

The meeting adjourned at 5:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Carolyn Cradduck

Planning/APCMinutes/2013-2014/Mar17