Committee on the Improvement of Undergraduate Education

October 8, 2012
(12-13, #2)

APPROVED

Members present: Abul Azad (EET), Pat Anderson (Alumni), Anne Birberick (Vice Provost), Richard Blecksmith (LAS), Billie Giese (VPA), Jason Hanna (LAS), Brian Mackie (BUS), Sarah McHone-Chase (LIB), Mark Mehrer (LAS), Kathleen Musker (HHS), Joel Stafstrom (UCC), James Sykora (Student/CEET), Robert Wolf (Student/HHS).

Members absent: Kyle Bak (Student/SA), Chris Jones (Honors), Denise Hayman (CHANCE).

Others: Jeanne Ratfield, (Administrative Assistant to Vice Provost) Recorder.

I. Adoption of Agenda

A motion was made by Musker to approve the agenda by adding an item under New Business, survey request from the Presidential Commission on the Status of Minorities, seconded by Giese. The motion passed.

II. Approval of Minutes

Stafstrom made a motion to approve the minutes from the September 10, 2012 meeting, seconded by Musker. Motion passed.

III. Introductions

There were new members in attendance so introductions were made.

IV. Old Business

A. Instructional Grant Funding

Birberick gave a brief summary of the conversation the committee had at its last meeting with regard to funding availability for instructional grants for this year. She indicated she would revisit the issue with her business manager. She reviewed accounts with her business manager and there is no money available for these grants this year. She is suggesting a one year hiatus and is hopeful that some
funding will be available next year. She assured the committee that the funds still owed to the individuals awarded grants last year is still available and will remind those individuals of the report that is due at the end of October.

Mackie brought up that they had also talked about offering grants that have no monetary value, offering certificates. For the benefit of the new committee members Birberick gave a brief background on the nature of the grants and how the awarding of funds worked. Discussion continued on this subject and included reviewing the effectiveness of the program. The process was changed last year to split the funding received into two payments so that awardees got part of the money up front and then the remainder paid when their final report was submitted.

A motion was made by McHone-Chase to take a one year hiatus on the awarding of the instructional grants, seconded by Hanna. **Nine voted in favor of the hiatus. There was one abstention. Motion carried.**

Stafstrom suggested that prior to the end of the academic year when the budget situation is known, the committee revisit this issue again. Birberick agreed. Sykora asked what the typical awards were. Birberick explained that the awards range from acquiring equipment or supplies ($500-$1000) to summer salary for faculty ($3500). Mackie interjected that typically it is not monies they can receive in their own department. Birberick mentioned that some hazmat gloves were bought in one proposal. A ladder for the observatory was another funded proposal.

**B. EUTA/EUIA**

Mackie thanked Stafstrom for his work on revising the EUTA/EUIA forms in an effort to make the process a little more transparent, a little easier to follow, and being specific in what is wanted. Stafstrom stated this matter was discussed both last spring, and again at the September meeting, where the minutes from that meeting were discussed. Last year the committee found that they all weren’t getting the information they wanted. There were issues with the boxes on the form and how the information in those boxes wasn’t necessarily in the correct form. There were questions about letters of recommendation, how they are signed, and how they are presented. Stafstrom indicated he didn’t remove a lot of information, just reorganized it in attempt to make it easier to navigate both for the committee and those completing the nomination.

Stafstrom stated that previously the rubric did not contain information on scoring letters of recommendation and many committee members felt that the letters contain a great deal of important information. A specific category for the letters of recommendation has been added to the rubric. A checklist was also added. It will probably need to be reformatted before it goes out.
Stafstrom mentioned that there are a couple steps in this process. It always has to begin in the department. Many departments have active student committees and it is made clear that there needs to be major student input into this process. Stafstrom said that is emphasized in a statement on the nomination form. How student input was obtained if the department doesn’t have an active student advisory committee also needs to be included. The next part of the process comes from the college which typically also has a student advisory committee that needs to review the nomination.

Regarding the issue of signatures for the letters submitted in the process, Birberick stated that she spoke with Legal, and being that there is no official policy, this committee can establish their own protocol. Stafstrom indicated the way he worded the nomination form was that the preferred method is submission of letters as PDFs. A brief discussion of submission methods occurred. The committee decided that the department would submit the letters of recommendation in PDF format. The entire document should be submitted as a single PDF.

Stafstrom said he changed the form so that the signatures were all on the cover page with the checklist. Azad asked about the space limit of the various boxes, particularly on page 7, Prompt 4. Stafstrom indicated that box did not previously have a limit and believes the information asked for is a finite list. Mackie indicated previously that there was a limit on the total number of pages. Stafstrom feared that inappropriate information will be dumped into this box. Mackie said he didn’t see why a limit couldn’t be put on this box. Stafstrom suggested a one page limit. Birberick agreed indicating that only the most recent, relevant information should be provided. Mackie suggested the form indicate that the most recent and critical information be included in the instructions for that box. Stafstrom suggested that it say the nomination should give priority to the most recent information. Birberick indicated that the more guidance and structure given will aid the students in presenting their candidate in the best light possible.

Stafstrom pointed out that he changed the wording in #5 in reference to student evaluations. The old wording said “this instructor/teacher has demonstrated continuous teaching excellence over the period of time employed at NIU” – he changed the wording to: “This instructor/teacher has demonstrated a pattern of sustained teaching excellence at NIU...” because the students may not be able to access the individual’s entire history.

Stafstrom reviewed the changes that had been made to the document following his meeting with Mackie and student member, Kyle Bak. He mentioned the first page now contains the required signatures and checklist. He suggested the checklist be edited to contain actual check boxes. Previously the form contained the list of topics that would be asked for in the document, which is redundant so he removed it.
He stated the eligibility for nomination hasn’t changed. The timetable needs to be filled in with this year’s dates. There were a few wording changes but he tried very hard not to change substance. The department-level procedures are virtually identical. He mentioned box 1 in that section asks what was done in the absence of an active student advisory committee. The department must indicate how students were involved in the process.

The college-level procedures changed very little. There is a lot of repetition in regard to where to submit the information. He said information about submitting the pdf as well as one complete hard copy is mentioned throughout the document two, if not three, times. Birberick pointed out a correction to #2 in the college level procedures - ..student advisory committee, or a similar body..(page 5). Stafstrom asked that other corrections be submitted to him. Stafstrom suggested that committee members review the instructions for the prompt boxes so the information filled in there reflects what is desired.

The committee then discussed the rubric. Currently all the categories are weighted equally. There was discussion on whether all categories should carry the same weight. Stafstrom indicated that he thought two of the categories should have different weights. The fourth category, recognition, he believed should have less weight. He indicated that he thought the letters of recommendation should have more weight. Birberick stated that, after listening to the discussion, she understood that the letters of recommendation are viewed as important and need to carry more weight. Birberick suggested that, based on the discussion, the categories should use a 1-7 rating scale except for category #4 which would use a 1-4 scale and category #6 would use a 1-12 scale. Stafstrom made a motion to adopt that rating scale, seconded by Hanna. The motion passed.

Birberick suggested providing an Excel spreadsheet that listed the scores by category as well as each nominee’s total score so those can be examined if needed. Mackie said that the individual scores can be hidden and used if more information is needed. Giese commented that she remembers having that kind of information and how it showed there was agreement among committee members. It was mainly utilized when items came into question.

Azad made a motion, seconded by Musker to accept the two forms, one for Excellence in Teaching, one for Instructor with changes to the rubric and other editorial changes committee members submit to Stafstrom. The motion passed.
**New Business**

Birberick stated she received an email from Wei Luo from the Presidential Commission on the Status of Minorities (PCSM). The email reported that a charge of the PCSM is to “annually review campus committees, commissions and boards to ensure the equitable representation of minority perspectives in university policies and practices.” She indicated the information will be used in a report for the President. It asked if information pertaining to minority representation on the committee could be provided. She stated that other committees are sending out emails to all of their committee members using the HR categories, asking them to reply via confidential email. The categories are: 1) male or female, 2) (choose as many as apply) American Indian or Alaskan Native; Asian; Black or African American; Non-Hispanic; Hispanic or Latino; Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander; White/Non-Hispanic; Other/Not Indicated. Stafstrom asked whether they were collecting information or trying to change the composition of the committee. Birberick said they are just collecting data. She also stated that the composition of the committees is dictated by the Bylaws. Birberick suggested that the process would be that an email will be sent to the committee members listing the HR categories, giving a deadline to self-report, and the information collected will be reported to PCSM. On a motion by Mehrer, seconded by McHone-Chase, the committee agreed to that process. **The motion passed.**

**Adjournment**

Azad made a motion to adjourn at 2:31 p.m., seconded by McHone-Chase. **Motion passed.**

Respectfully submitted

Jeanne E. Ratfield