Present: A. Dreessen (Ex Officio, Student Involvement and Leadership Development), B. Hemphill (Ex Officio, Vice President for Student Affairs), M. Lenczewski (LAS), C. T. Lin (UCC/LAS), K. Martens (VPA), P. Nelson (EDUC), E. Seaver (Ex Officio, Vice Provost), M. Stang (Ex Officio, Student Housing & Dining Services), L. Vandecreek (LIB)

Absent: N. Bukonda (HHS), H. Harris (Student/BUS), A. Peterson (Student/EDUC),

Guest: T. Griffin (Ombudsman)
Bob Albanese, Associate Vice President, Finance and Facilities
Rena Cotsones, Executive Director, Community Relations
Denise Rose, Director, Orientation

I. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

A motion was made and seconded to approve the agenda. The motion passed.

II. ANNOUNCEMENTS

A. Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the November 8, 2005, meeting were electronically approved.

III. OLD BUSINESS

There was no old business.

IV. NEW BUSINESS

A. First Year Connections - UNIV 101/201 Instructors – Denise Rode

Denise Rode, Director of Orientation, stated that CUAE is the oversight committee for the First Year Connections program. UNIV 101 and UNIV 201 are an extended orientation course offering one credit hour of elective credit for NIU’s new students (approximately 50% of new freshmen and less than 2% of transfer students). In addition, she reported that the new REACH program has been strongly supported by both Student and Academic Affairs. The REACH program was piloted two years ago, and it was brought back this current year in an expanded version. She reported that the program has been successful enough that it will probably be continued. In the REACH program, over 1,000 first-year freshman students, who were not connected in a formal way with any other structured university program where they would have a ready-made support system, were called, twice in most instances, by peer student callers. She noted that the greatest impacts on students, whether they are new or continuing, are faculty and peers, and that’s what
First Year Connections tries to do – connect NIU’s first-year students with faculty, staff, and upper-class students who can be factors in the students’ successful experiences at NIU. Student callers are trained to make the calls, and there is a template that averages in length about five minutes that is used by the REACH callers when talking with the students. The question raised most by the called students was “how do I connect with my academic advisor?” She noted this came as a surprise since these are students who were two to three months out of their orientation experience. They had already met with an academic advisor during orientation, and, theoretically, had the information they needed to make those contacts with academic advisors; yet, they didn’t seem to know how to connect. Students also wanted to know how to access their DARS report online. There were very few, approximately 25%, students who were called the first time that were identified for professional follow-up; however, student callers were also trained to be able to make those referrals as needed.

On a separate issue, D. Rode reported that now is the time that faculty and staff are being recruited to serve as instructors for the UNIV 101/201 course. The advisory committee has talked very seriously about expanding the number of faculty members to teach the course. The main goal in terms of instructor recruitment is to develop a stronger pool of instructors from the ranks of the tenured faculty in particular. She indicated that she is hopeful that CUAE members will assist in helping to recruit faculty by encouraging their colleagues to consider this opportunity.

M. Lenczewski suggested that it might be helpful to have this information forwarded to department advisors. She noted that, although she has been on campus five years, she has only become aware of this need for instructors through the CUAE committee rather than through her department. Providing this information direct to advisors might result in additional assistance in expanding the pool of instructors.

B. City of DeKalb/NIU Relationship – Rena Cotsones

Rena Cotsones, Executive Director, Community Relations at NIU, provided the committee with an overview of the City of DeKalb/NIU partnership. She said that when she first arrived at NIU seven years ago, there was no routine, consistent way of communication between the local city government, business and community leaders, and NIU. The most important focus of her office now is to make sure that NIU has positive relationships with business, local government and community leaders so that if problems arise or if they have suggestions, those external agencies know who to contact for direction or referrals. She noted that, although her office is called “Community Relations,” everyone who works here or goes to school here is engaged in community relations. The university and the community interact at several different points, with students being our ambassadors, and she looks for opportunities to create positive interaction and to make sure that the present interactions are positive. For example, this year, NIU Homecoming, which is the 100th anniversary of NIU homecoming, coincides with the 150th anniversary of the City of DeKalb, and a joint homecoming parade is being planned which offers a great opportunity for the university and community to come together.

She went on to say that the DeKalb and Sycamore communities are very interested and tuned into what happens on NIU’s campus. She said that some of this is general interest because she feels that most people want to see the university do well. She pointed out that before the office of Community Relations was established, there was no communication unless there was a problem to be solved, whereas presently, she is able to, as well as a number of other university representatives, serve on boards and be in the middle of positive community things. Some things may not necessarily have anything to do with the university, but they involve the community, such as economic development.
issues, the Chamber of Commerce, tourism, etc., all of which have mutual benefit for both the community and the university. In this way, the university is consistently at the table for the good of the community, not only for DeKalb and Sycamore, but on a regional basis as well. She pointed out that if the university does well, then the community will do well, and vice versa.

R. Cotsones went on to say that one of the challenges of recruiting students to come to NIU is talking to them about the quality of life that they can expect here. Thus, the university gets involved with things like the downtown development project that is ongoing right now; a number of individuals from the university will be involved with that. In addition, she is going to serve on the Board of the “Renew DeKalb” organization that is being established. She and B. Hemphill, along with some students, will attend meetings to talk about what students want in order to keep them in town.

She also said that helping the community think differently about how they can embrace the university students, faculty and staff, is a challenge that her office undertakes everyday. There are some routine things that are done, such as, a small team of university administrators that meets with a small team of city officials every six weeks to share information and discuss any issues they might have. Discussion has also taken place with the DeKalb Economic Development group regarding what NIU students are looking for in terms of shopping opportunities, restaurants, etc.

E. Seaver commented that there is the perception on campus that there is nothing to do here on the weekends. He asked how the university could address that. R. Cotsones answered that, in working with the Chamber of Commerce over the last couple of years, a Convention and Visitors Bureau has been established so that now a better job is being done of pulling together information about what kind of places are already here, although more needs to be developed via means of getting a better array of shopping, dining, etc., for students. Diversity issues, safety issues, etc., are topics that require and will continue to be a part of ongoing dialogue between the university and the city.

E. Seaver pointed out that it is important, as well, to be able to better promote the benefits of living in this community to our present and prospective faculty. R. Cotsones agreed that people in the community are concerned about that as well. She indicated she would be willing to discuss that aspect in more detail to see if there are ways that her office could also be of help.

C. NIU Parking and Bike Programs – Bob Albanese

Bob Albanese, Associate Vice President, Finance and Facilities, provided the committee with an overview of NIU campus parking and the bike program. He reported that the parking program on campus is a bond revenue unit, and no state tax dollars are directed to support parking; it is a self-supporting, self-funded unit. There are two main sources of revenue for parking – permit income and fine income. He reported that since permit fees have been increased, substantially for red reserved spaces, over the past few years, revenues are more in line with where they should be. Income generated from the sale of permits now outweighs income collected from fines.

He reported that 70-80 spaces were created as a result of raising the permit rate for red reserved spaces. The goal of campus parking to try and maximize the number of parking spaces on campus, and any recommendations for modifications in campus parking are examined by the Campus Parking Committee. In an attempt to keep and balance “green space” and parking space, it has to be determined how to allocate the number of spaces on campus.
He said that the inventory of spaces has not changed much since the parking deck has been in existence. Building a second parking deck would add spaces, however, parking rates would most likely double; parking decks are costly and expensive to maintain and they alter the aesthetics of campus. The existing parking deck functions very well and efforts are being made to best maximize the inventory of spaces that is available.

B. Albanese went on to say that his top priority is to try to accommodate commuter students. Over the years this has been accomplished by converting some blue spaces to student spaces in areas where there might be an opportunity to increase the number of yellow spaces for commuting students. At the beginning of every semester, the mix of the student body and faculty/staff changes, so parking patterns are re-examined, and additional rows of yellow or blue are sometimes added. This is a constant process that is done to look at how parking spaces are being utilized in order to maximize the number of spaces.

Included in upcoming projects for this year are plans to redo the field house parking lot. With safety as a goal, improvements to the lot will include reorientation of all parking spaces to a different direction in order to create additional spaces, providing additional lighting and improving pedestrian traffic flow through the lot. It is hoped, too, that the student parking lots on Annie Glidden Road will receive paving and improved lighting this summer.

B. Albanese also reported that no additional parking will be added during the next two years, except for any improvements that may be made on the far west campus area. By developing a new green permit (discounted residence hall permit costing $25.00), it is hoped that more individuals will be encouraged to park in remote locations and take buses to campus. More of the new green permits, which have become very popular with commuting students, have been sold than originally anticipated. Since parking on the west side of campus has been encouraged, this has helped somewhat to alleviate a little of the parking issue on the east side of Glidden Road.

Studies of other universities that have utilized bikes on campus have been done, and riding bikes to campus is being encouraged. Several years ago, the Red Bike program was initiated in which recycled bikes were painted red and made available to any student to get across campus. The program was not successful, mainly because the program wasn’t structured correctly. Currently, a bike loan program for on campus is being investigated. The program would make bicycles readily available to students during the good weather months, and it’s hoped that such a program could be ready for this coming August. Student input is being gathered to see what can be done to make this campus user friendly for bike traffic. He noted that more bike racks will also be added to campus. It is believed that such a bike program would help alleviate the vehicle drop-off/pickup traffic around campus. He also mentioned that he works with the city and county on traffic signal improvements and on bike paths to connect them to the university.

B. Albanese emphasized that he is always open to and looking for creative ideas and input for improving parking and bikes on campus as well as ways for improving pedestrian traffic. He stressed that he would welcome ideas from faculty and staff or student groups that would improve the safety and traffic/pedestrian flow on campus. He mentioned also that sidewalk improvements are being planned.

E. Seaver commented that as the west campus is developed more it might be wise to start thinking about bike paths in that area. He pointed out that bike paths get used a lot during nice weather for walking and running, as well as biking, and the addition of bike paths would help in connecting the west campus to residence halls. B. Albanese remarked that
this issue has been brought up and will be looked at in conjunction with the development of roadways on the west campus.

M. Lenczewski asked about the feasibility of closing Normal Road to vehicle traffic, from Lincoln Highway to Lucinda Avenue, and making it a pedestrian walkway. She suggested that this entire area could be given an overhaul and made into a green space with a courtyard area. B. Albanese said that this issue has been raised before, and the City of DeKalb has been very resistant to this idea. T. Griffin added that the city thought this was an important road to keep open as a main fire and emergency access route to certain parts of town, as well as there being an issue related to other emergency evacuation procedures. M. Lenczewski suggested that the road could be designed similar to Carroll Avenue where emergency vehicles could drive through if necessary but regular car traffic could be prohibited. E. Seaver added that many others have wondered and talked about this issue as well. B. Albanese offered to raise this issue once again with the City of DeKalb. He also told the group that state funding is being sought to embark on a project to recreate and improve the entire patio area near the library.

V. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 3:40 p.m. The April 11, 2006, meeting has been rescheduled for Tuesday, April 18, 2006, beginning at 2:00 p.m. in Altgeld Hall 225.

Respectfully submitted,
Mollie Keller
Recording Secretary