Northern Illinois University  
COMMITTEE ON THE UNDERGRADUATE ACADEMIC ENVIRONMENT  
108th Meeting  
Tuesday, April 18, 2006  
Altgeld Hall 225

Approved

Present: N. Bukonda (HHS), 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), M. Stang (Ex Officio, Student Housing & Dining Services), L. Vandecreek (LIB)

Absent: E. Seaver (Ex Officio, Vice Provost), H. Harris (Student/BUS), A. Peterson (Student/EDUC),

Guest: T. Griffin (Ombudsman)

I. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

M. Lenczewski added one item of new business, Selection of Committee Chair for 2006-2007, to the agenda.

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

II. ANNOUNCEMENTS

A. Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the March 21, 2006, meeting were electronically approved.

III. OLD BUSINESS

A. Follow-up Discussion on Speaker Presentations of March 21, 2006, CUAE Meeting

First Year Connections – UNIV 101/201

M. Lenczewski noted that, since CUAE is the oversight committee for the First Year Connections Program, the committee is encouraged to forward recommendations and/or observations as it sees fit.  She went on to say that her observation is that the First Year Connections program seems to be doing a great job, noting the increased rate of student retention and the efforts being made in trying to get students more involved with the university.  She said she did receive via campus mail a notification that went out to all faculty regarding potentially teaching UNIV 101/201, and she shared that information with other faculty members.  She suggested that a
recommendation be made to increase communication/publicity even more in order to get this information out to faculty.

N. Bukonda asked if there was any data available regarding the level of satisfaction of the students taking these courses. T. Griffin, a member of the advisory board for First Year Connections, said that regular course evaluations are done which are evaluated by the university. He said they also complete two separate evaluations unique to that program, one related to the instructor and one related to the content of the course. This data has been collected for approximately six to eight years, and he is confident that if this information was requested from CUAE, the program would forward it to the committee. M. Lenczewski said that this could be included in the committee’s agenda for next year.

T. Griffin noted that CUAE has the opportunity to be a potential source of advocacy for the programs (UNIV 101/201, REACH Program), particularly with regard to the venues of Faculty Senate and University Council as well as with the new provost. He indicated that if CUAE feels that more resources would be appropriate for these kinds of efforts, then this might be stated as such in an appropriate form of appreciative communication. K. Martens suggested that the committee wait to formally take action on this until evaluation data has been presented to the group. M. Lenczewski agreed and suggested that this be included in the goals for the committee for next year. C. T. Lin, relating to discussion held at another standing committee meeting, wondered whether the UNIV-101 program included a diversity component, and T. Griffin indicated that this was a requirement of all instructors for that course.

M. Lenczewski summarized that the following three items will be included on the list of CUAE topics for further discussion during 2006-2007:

1. UNIV 101/201 - Student Evaluations Data
2. UNIV 101/201 - Discuss diversity issue - Data/statistics, breakdown of students taking course (ethnicity, gender, etc.) and curricular content of material in course
3. UNIV 101/201 - Proposal for approval of the program - indicate advocacy from CUAE and recommendation that the university increase resources toward the program

**City of DeKalb/NIU Partnership**

M. Lenczewski commented that she was pleased to learn from Rena Cotsones, Director, Community Relations, at the last CUAE meeting that the office of Community Relations was involved in an active program between the NIU and the City of DeKalb and that an effort is being made to build further on that relationship.

P. Nelson asked if the office of Community Relations has a website or a mechanism that could be used to share information and follow progress of current initiatives so that members of CUAE would be made aware of what is currently being done and kept informed of new initiatives. If not, an option to this might be that the office of Community Relations could notify and/or furnish reports/updates
periodically to CUAE in some manner; that information could then be shared with faculty.

K. Martens commented that she is curious about the “Renew DeKalb” aspect and what students want. It was noted that student focus groups have been used for this purpose. L. VandeCreek asked if there was student representation on the city committee as that would be a good opportunity to get student input. T. Griffin pointed out that the office of Institutional Research gathers data and would have results from past student surveys as well.

M. Lenczewski suggested that the committee do a follow-up to get information on what kind of student input they gather, where they get the data, etc. B. Hemphill commented that sometimes when there is an issue in the community, and students want to get involved, the Student Association has double representatives that work with the city. C. T. Lin asked how, in addition to communication between the city and community, the office of Community Relations could assist and/or promote faculty/student development. He also commented that it is important to look at and promote the global aspect and be a global institution. M. Lenczewski agreed and suggested the idea of a research and development technology center close to campus might be beneficial.

M. Lenczewski said she feels the committee has a good start in developing a dialogue between the Community Relations office and CUAE, resulting in possibly more direction for the committee and the potential creation of some type of approval/communication instrument to make recommendations for changes.

Parking/Bike Programs

M. Lenczewski commented that she was pleased to hear Bob Albanese say at the last meeting that an effort was being made to save the present green space on campus and work toward making the campus more beautiful. She noted that these issues were originally brought up due to the anticipated increase in bike usage now that spring is here and the lack of spaces to park bikes around campus. At that meeting, Bob Albanese had also indicated that his office will be doing some investigating of the present bicycle situation, including a bike loan program, over the coming summer, and there may be more specific information that he could share with the committee at a later date. K. Martens suggested that the committee look into this again in the fall when further data from summer studies may be available.

C. T. Lin commented that, as there are not bicycle paths throughout the entire campus, students currently ride bikes on the streets and sidewalks which is dangerous for both bikers and pedestrians. M. Lenczewski noted that, as Bob Albanese stated, bike paths are included as part of the plan for the west campus extension, however, no paths presently are in place to connect the east side of campus to the student populated west side. She asked if the committee though it would be feasible further explore this idea. It was suggested that this could be discussed with the City of DeKalb as a possible joint project.
C. T. Lin noted that the suggestion of closing Normal Road to vehicle traffic would also create additional green space for walking and possibly a connecting bike path. M. Lenczewski said that Bob Albanese indicated he would approach the city with this issue, and CUAE could ask for a follow-up on that suggestion to see what discussion or progress transpired over the summer. A possible recommendation from this committee could then follow.

C. T. Lin suggested compiling all of CUAE’s suggestions and recommendations into one document and forwarding it to the Student Association for input. M. Lenczewski also suggested that a full report be made to the Student Association which could include the committee’s goals, activities, proposals for improvements to the academic environment, etc. She indicated she would include this in the committee’s goals for the upcoming year. B. Hemphill suggested that this might be presented at a Student Association Senate meeting, possibly in late October or November. M. Lenczewski said that it might also be beneficial for a representative from CUAE to attend one of the Student Association Senate meetings monthly or once each semester to report updates on CUAE’s activities. It was also pointed out that the Student Association holds a seat on this committee, however, no student representative has attended during 2005-2006.

IV. NEW BUSINESS

A. Committee Goals and Recommendations for 2006-2007

Before discussing and setting the committee’s goals for 2006-2007, M. Lenczewski gave an overview of the status of each of the goals set by the committee for the current 2005-2006 academic year:

1) Obtain overview/background from Student Affairs and information from Ombudsman

Status: Brian Hemphill, Vice President for Student Affairs, and Tim Griffin, Ombudsman, made presentations to CUAE during 2005-2006.

2) Coordinate a student focus group that will provide a student perspective.

Status: B. Hemphill reported that Dr. Joyce Lieberman, Assistant Professor, Department of Teaching and Learning, has been conducting focus groups and meeting with many groups of students throughout the year. Dr. Lieberman focused mainly on factors that impacted students’ success in high school, how students transitioned into college, and factors that encouraged students to stay within the institution. B. Hemphill suggested that Dr. Lieberman be invited to attend a CUAE meeting to present data that has been collected.
3) Explore further the City of DeKalb/NIU relationship

**Status:** Presentation made to CUAE by Rena Cotsones, Director, NIU Community Relations. Committee will follow up on this relationship in fall.

M. Lenczewski also briefly reviewed a list of action items and goals set in April 2005 for the 2005-2006 year. As noted in that list of goals, C. T. Lin emphasized the importance of having the UCC Co-chair attend the first meeting of CUAE each fall. He also recommended that the CUAE Chair be invited to attend the UCC annual fall retreat. He felt this would provide context regarding the activities of CUAE and the workings and responsibilities of UCC.

M. Lenczewski noted that the committee did not address the issue of improvement of signage on campus this year, so it will be carried over for next year. Also, the committee has begun addressing the “commuter image,” perception versus reality, keeping students in the area, and the role of the community (DeKalb). B. Hemphill suggested that Troy Melendez, Director, Commuter and Non-Traditional Student Services, which is a new office just completing their first year of operation, be invited to come to a CUAE meeting to report on some of the services that office provides to students.

**B. Selection of Committee Chair for 2006-2007**

Selection of a committee chair was postponed until the first meeting of the fall 2006 semester.

**V. ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 3:02 p.m. The first meeting of the fall 2006 semester is scheduled for Tuesday, September 12, 2006, beginning at 2:00 p.m. in Altgeld Hall 225.

Respectfully submitted,
Mollie Keller
Recording Secretary