Committee on the Undergraduate Academic Environment

115th Meeting
Tuesday, November 13, 2007
Altgeld Hall 225

Minutes
Approved

Present: I. Bhanji (Student/LAS), T. Bough (VPA), D. Cesarotti (EET), A. Dreessen (Ex Officio, Student Involvement and Leadership Development), M. Lenczewski (LAS), W. Johnson (LIB), C. T. Lin (UCC/LAS), D. Pender (EDUC), S. Webber (BUS)

Absent: B. Hemphill (Ex Officio, Vice President for Student Affairs), E. Phillips (Student/Student Association), E. Seaver (Ex Officio, Vice Provost), K. Wesener (Ex-Officio, Executive Director, Housing and Dining)

Guest: Tim Griffin, Ombudsman
Bob Albanese, Associate Vice President, Finance and Facilities

I. Approval of Agenda

T. Bough asked to have one item, “Safety Net,” added to the agenda under New Business.

A motion was made by C. T. Lin, seconded by D. Cesarotti, to approve the revised agenda. The motion passed.

II. Announcements

A. Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the October 9, 2007, meeting were electronically approved.

B. M. Lenczewski announced that one revision had been made to the committee schedule of meeting topics to postpone the Provost’s overview of the strategic plan until the February 2008 meeting.

III. Old Business

There was no old business.
IV. NEW BUSINESS

A. Follow-up Discussion with Bob Albanese

M. Lenczewski introduced Bob Albanese, Associate Vice President for Finance and Facilities. Dr. Albanese said that he appreciated being asked to speak to the committee, and he emphasized the importance of being able to communicate to the campus community information about projects that are being worked on. He encouraged committee members to make comments or ask questions, or email him, about any of the projects he reports on.

Referring to a suggestion made by a student at a meeting last semester regarding having a bus shelter placed near Barsema Hall, B. Albanese reported that there has been a delay in getting a bus shelter in place due to the issue of placement and concern of aesthetics expressed by the College of Business. He said that he is currently working with the dean of the college to concur on a location for the shelter. A. Dreessen asked if, with the onset of winter weather coming, it might be possible to place one of the Huskie Bus GPS monitors inside Barsema Hall, so students could stay inside the building until the bus arrives. She said that this has has been done in the Holmes Student Center to alert students to the arrival of buses. B. Albanese agreed to look into this possibility.

Also as an update to his earlier report, B. Albanese reported that the bike program has been expanded, with six new ones being purchased this semester, and now totals twenty bikes. The program now has approximately 12-20 regular users that come in every week, and new bikes will continue to be purchased as the demand increases. He indicated he is committed to continuing the expansion of the bike program. M. Lenczewski asked if there had been any thought given to a possible second rental location on campus. B. Albanese answered that the student recreation center had been recommended, and he intends to follow up on that.

B. Albanese gave brief updates on the following active capitol improvement projects, most of which have been completed:

1) Student Financial Aid area: A complete renovation was finished in time for the beginning of the fall 2007 semester. The area has been improved to allow for increased privacy for both students and staff. Cost of the project was nearly $500,000.
2) Gabel Hall Child Care Lab: A two to three year program has been put in place for replacing the playground equipment that had been vandalized the previous year. The new playground equipment will be an upgraded version with an increased safety level. New concrete and fencing, as well as some door upgrades, have also been included in the upgrade.

3) Hoffman Estates Center: At an approximate cost of $250,000, upgrades have been made to the ten-year old atrium and some doors, as well as some safety issue improvements.

4) Nursing School Building: A building renovation resulting in the better use of space was completed in preparedness for the potential expansion of this program.

5) Founders Library: A new coffee bar is being built which is expected to enhance traffic in the library and make it more user friendly. Enough revenue should be generated to pay for itself.

6) Swen Parson College of Law: A solution being implemented to correct the heating and air conditioning problem in order to maintain a level temperature.

Looking ahead to next summer, he reported that, as a result of a critical safety issue case presented to the state by President Peters and the office of Federal Relations, for the first time in over five years, a project planned for next summer will be the upgrading of the elevators in both Zulauf Hall and Davis Hall. This will be done as a combined package, at a cost of nearly $1,000,000 with funding by the Capital Development Board, with the state funding approximately three-fourths of the project and NIU the other one fourth. He noted that the Zulauf Hall elevator project has been on the list of capitol projects for seven years.

He reported that a second project scheduled for summer 2008 is to build a chilled water plant, which will be the second one on campus. The plant building will be located near the Campus Life Building and will take two years to complete. He explained that, in order to make the new plant operational, Normal Road will have to be closed for approximately eight weeks from May 15-August 15 to allow for the placing and connecting of piping from the chiller plant to all the buildings for completion in time for the fall 2008 semester. He said that capital funds have not been delegated for this project, and, so, it will be funded through combined support from the Capital
Development Board, an economic development grant, and NIU. He noted that it is expected that the new chiller plant will be able to service the university for the next twenty years and has the potential to service the “north forty” area if the need arises. He said that more detailed information about this project and the announcement of expected closure areas will be communicated to the campus community in the spring.

He commented that the university is very pleased with the completed College Avenue bridge project, a project that had been on the waiting list for eight years. In conjunction with the bridge project, improvements were also made to the roadway, and additional parking was added to the lagoon side parking lot.

He went on to say that next year improvements are scheduled to be made to the Lowden Hall parking lot, the Human Resources building parking lot, and the cinema parking lot on West Lincoln Highway. He explained that the old cinema building is scheduled to be demolished over the December semester break, and the lot will be repaved and lighting upgraded. It is hoped that a connection/access will be made to Stadium Drive from the cinema lot.

In addition, another large project, although it may not be completed this year, is to invigorate the MLK commons. He said that a new plan is being looked at to make better use of the MLK commons space and make it more user friendly.

He said that the Monsanto Building renovation is completed, and the ITS department has been relocated from Swen Parson to Monsanto. In addition, the Speech and Hearing Clinic is scheduled to be moved there later this year, in addition to the Tri-County Clinic. Expansion of the program is being considered, and negotiations are underway for a possible partnership with Kishwaukee Hospital, in addition to this becoming a clinical learning site.

He also reported that in conjunction with the Governor’s Committee on Sustainability, which President Peters referred to in his State of the University address, the university has formed its own committee to look at “green” issues and what the university can do to bring the program to the next level. Jeff Daurer, Space Administrator, Finance and Facilities, has been appointed to chair this committee, and he will report to the state next spring on what the university has in place. The new committee will look at what is already in place and will look at putting together new programs to educate students on how to deal with “green” issues. He added that as old buildings are rehabilitated and new buildings are constructed, it is
necessary to think about adding a “green” piece to make them environmentally sound. Also, ideas for upgrades to the recycling program are being reviewed, as well as ways in which to make sure environmentally safe chemicals are being used on campus. He added that this past summer a recycling program was put in place for the recycling of all computer equipment.

C. T. Lin recommended that the committee composition include faculty and student representatives. B. Albanese will follow up with the chair of the committee regarding communicating information about the committee to the campus community. D. Pender suggested that a public health representative also be included on the committee.

B. Albanese reported that, effective January 1, 2008, the State of Illinois has passed the smoke-free Illinois act. As of January 1, 2008, smoking will not be allowed on campus within fifteen feet of any building entrance, window or air intake vent, and smoking will no longer be allowed in university vehicles. Ash urns are being moved out away from each building, and appropriate signage is being added to building entrances. He emphasized that the university will be respectful of smokers rights as well during the process of implementing the new law, as both smokers and non-smokers need to be accommodated.

I. Bhanji asked about the possibility of having equipment upgraded at the Student Recreation Center. B. Albanese recommended that this request be approached from a safety/health perspective and be taken to the director of the Recreation Center and to the Student Association. T. Griffin commented that the Recreation Center has its own student advisory committee that may also consider this request.

T. Bough said there is a serious campus safety issue with the pedestrian crossings and vehicle traffic on Glidden Road. He asked if there had ever been any discussion of pedestrian bridges being constructed over Glidden Road. B. Albanese answered that pedestrian bridges, as well as several other options to aid with this safety concern, had been considered, including constructing fencing. However, pedestrian bridges, at a cost of approximately $8 million, are cost prohibitive. He said that it is hoped that the most recent implementation of a reduced speed limit to 30 mph on Glidden Road will result in a significant safety improvement. He also noted that the reconfiguration of the drive and parking lot, as well as the elimination of vehicle traffic in the circle drive near Evans Field House, has helped to alleviate traffic congestion entering and leaving the Lucinda Avenue entrance to this area.

B. Albanese again encouraged committee members to contact him to let him know of needed campus repairs, especially
anything that would be an easy to fix or safety improvement situation such as a deteriorating concrete in sidewalks or non-working handicapped doors, etc.

B. **Task Force on Student Success**

M. Lenczewski reported that, as a part of the Provost’s Strategic Planning Initiative, two student task forces have been formed, the Task Force on Curricular Innovation and the Task Force on Student Success. She said that she has been appointed, as chair of CUAE, to serve on the Task Force on Student Success which will work with Enrollment Services, academic support services, Student Affairs, and the Assessment Panel to look at several issues relating to increasing student retention and graduation rates. Student survey data relating to campus climate and student perceptions and satisfaction will be looked at, as well as impacted courses and majors. Other issues to be addressed by the task force will include looking at improvement of advising and accountability factors. She will provide an update to CUAE regarding the work of the task force at the February 12, 2008, meeting.

C. **Safety Net**

T. Bough explained that he is director of the Huskie Marching Band and spends many hours with students outside the realm of the normal classroom setting, especially when traveling to out of state athletic events. He said that recently a situation arose in which a student was in need of immediate counseling assistance. During the process of assisting the student in getting to the appropriate professional for help, he discovered that there are some gaps in the safety net process. As this is directly related to the academic environment as student safety, he felt he wanted to bring this to the attention of this committee.

As this was after hours, the Student Counseling Center was closed. He tried to contact the student’s hall director without success. After not receiving a call back for several days, he learned that all the hall directors were away at a conference, which left no one as a backup to check up on the student. (The hall director did return the call to T. Bough upon his return.) A satellite counseling center located in the residence hall was suggested; however, the information desk attendant was not aware that there was a counseling center. Once the center was located, the center was closed, with no directive signage indicating a contact telephone number for emergencies or where to go for assistance after hours. T. Bough stated that this is information that should be
readily available to anyone seeking assistance twenty-four hours per day. He said he has brought these concerns to the attention of the Director of the Student Counseling Center as well as to the hall director.

A. Dreessen responded that there are safety nets in place, however, in this case, it didn’t appear that there was enactment of the procedures. She said that there is always a professional back-up individual on call when the hall director is not there. She emphasized that all residence hall staff are trained and are aware of how to page the professional staff member on call, however, better enactment of the procedures must be in place. T. Bough asked how to communicate such information to campus, as the emergency book indicates that the Counseling Center should be called. She agreed that this is information that needs to be better communicated to the campus community, and she will convey this concern to the appropriate individuals in Student Affairs for review and discussion. She will follow-up with the committee on this topic at the February CUAE meeting.

T. Bough commented that the campus emergency flip-chart does not give indication that any of the services discussed during this meeting are available with the exception of the Counseling Center listing, which has listed open hours of 8:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m. He said that, if there are twenty-four hour emergency counseling resources available, they should also be included in the emergency document.

D. Pender volunteered to contact the directors of each one of the counseling resources on campus to see what ideas there might be for a unified emergency plan.

V. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 3:35 p.m.

The next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, February 12, 2008, at 2:00 p.m. in Altgeld Hall 225.

Respectfully submitted,
Mollie Montgomery
Recording Secretary