Northern Illinois University

COMMITTEE ON THE UNDERGRADUATE ACADEMIC ENVIRONMENT

123rd Meeting
Tuesday, September 8, 2009
Altgeld Hall 225

MINUTES

Approved

Present: T. Bough (VPA), J. Brunson (Ex Officio, Student Affairs), D. Cesarotti (EET), C. Downing (BUS), A. Dreessen (Ex Officio, Student Involvement and Leadership Development), B. Henry (HHS/UCC Rep), W. Johnson (LIB), M. Koren (HHS), M. Koss (EDU), E. Seaver (Ex Officio, Vice Provost), M. Stang (Ex Officio, Student Housing Services)

Absent: M. Lenczewski (LAS), D. Matousek (Student/SA), E. Oney (Student/HHS)

Guest: T. Griffin (Ombudsman)
Greg Long, Co-chair, Baccalaureate Review Task Force Steering Committee

I. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

E. Seaver requested to amend the agenda to add Item D. University Withdrawal Policy, under Section II. Announcements.

A motion was made by D. Cesarotti, seconded by W. Johnson, to approve the agenda with the requested addition. The motion passed.

II. ANNOUNCEMENTS

A. Committee Member Introductions

Committee members introduced themselves and indicated which college and/or department they represented.

B. Approval of Minutes

Committee members reviewed the April 14, 2009, CUAE minutes.

A motion was made by T. Bough, seconded by D. Cesarotti, to approve the April 14, 2009, minutes of the Committee on the Undergraduate Academic Environment meeting. The motion carried.
C. **Baccalaureate Review Update**

E. Seaver introduced Greg Long, Co-chair of the Baccalaureate Review Steering Committee. Long provided the committee with a status report of the work of the Baccalaureate Review Task Force. He explained that this initiative grew from the initial idea of reviewing, and possibly reforming, the general education program.

Long said that, after he and several other individuals attended an institute on general education, the group realized that review of the baccalaureate goals would be necessary before the review and reform of general education could be undertaken. He said it was discovered that none of the individuals attending the conference had any knowledge of what NIU’s baccalaureate experience and goals were. Thus, through the strategic planning process and the Curricular Innovations Task Force, the Baccalaureate Review Task Force was formed to work with the university community to determine what is important for NIU graduates to have when they leave with a baccalaureate degree. He added that the baccalaureate goals should be the driving force behind the entire undergraduate curriculum.

Long said that the task force is comprised of faculty, staff and students. In order for the task force to obtain information from the campus community, the task force sponsored an online survey and conducted approximately 45 focus groups with numerous constituencies across campus. He reported that over 900 individuals responded to the survey, with a little less than half of those being students. He said that results from both the survey and the focus groups revealed that there was very broad overall agreement in the responses, regardless of the specific constituency. There were three major areas consistently identified that it was felt NIU graduates should have: critical thinking, communication skills, and understanding of context (the “Three Cs”). Long said it is hoped that the identifying and putting in place of baccalaureate goals will lend direction to the review and reform of the general education program.

Long went on to say that university reports will be coming out soon. The goal is to get the report documents out to the campus community through various communications during this fall semester in order to obtain feedback. Feedback will then be discussed and used to refine and make more precise the proposed goals. If the proposed goals are then endorsed, during the next spring semester, the next step will be to determine how to translate this into specific proposed learning goals to be submitted to the appropriate university governance committees for approval. Once endorsement is made, discussion will be initiated on how to implement the proposed goals.

Seaver added that eventually the baccalaureate goals will be the goals that all programming at the university will be asked to address, whether it is in general education, in the major or in co-curricular. Programs will be asked to identify what aspects of their programming are contributing to the attainment of these
goals by undergraduate students by the time they complete their baccalaureate degree. He added that this is not something that will be completed during this upcoming year. The largest piece of the process will be, once agreement is reached and these goals are translated into learning outcomes, to then ask departments to conduct fit gap analyses to determine where they are within their particular programs. Then the process of reviewing the general education program can be looked at with relation to what part of the goals should be general education and how they will be addressed.

Greg Long will attend a CUAE meeting during the spring semester to provide a further status report.

D. University Withdrawal Policy

E. Seaver announced that a memorandum regarding university withdrawals was recently circulated to the college offices, with subsequent memos to be distributed to other offices soon. He said that the memorandum states that there will no longer be negotiating of backdating of withdrawals. He explained that the university had, for an extended period of time, a policy of backdating withdrawals of students from the university. He said that, primarily with extenuating circumstances, students were able to work with the academic colleges to select a date at which their withdrawal would be effective. Extenuating circumstances were defined as circumstances that were beyond the student’s control that kept the student from continuing to pursue education at NIU. He said that students would often go to college offices quite some time after the date of the initial withdrawal circumstance and negotiate a withdrawal date. The academic college, with compassion for the student, would typically backdate the withdrawal date, and the student would not be charged fees. This practice has caused the university negative audit finds through the external auditors.

Seaver went on to explain that the university is obligated by federal law to notify the National Student Clearing House of a student’s status change within thirty days of that action. Similarly, if a student is on federal financial aid, the Student Financial Aid office has 45 days to make the determination of what aid must be returned to reconcile the student’s financial aid. Seaver said that there will no longer be negotiation of the date of withdrawal; the date that a student comes in to the college office to withdraw will be recorded as the date of the withdrawal. If there continues to be negative audit findings, the university could potentially lose its Title IV aid from the federal government or have to pay back interest, in addition to running the risk of having federal auditors on campus reviewing each individual student case with significant consequences.

Seaver said that discussions are being planned to establish a process that will allow students with extenuating situations to be request consideration of recalculation of the student’s bill. He emphasized that this is an issue that will be addressed by the Bursar’s Office, however, the Bursar, Academic Affairs, and
Student Affairs will be working together on developing a process for these special situations, possibly through a review committee.

T. Griffin asked what the procedure will be, in the meantime, for a student to request a tuition refund, that is, until a procedure is identified for special withdrawal situations. Seaver answered that students should discuss any requests for refunds with the Bursar’s Office.

III. OLD BUSINESS

There was no old business.

IV. NEW BUSINESS

A. **CUAE Representative to Serve on the Affirmative Action and Diversity Resources (AADR) Committee**

E. Seaver asked for a volunteer to serve as the CUAE representative to the Affirmative Action and Diversity Resources Committee (AADR) for 2009-2010. W. Johnson, who currently has been serving in this capacity, volunteered and, with no objections heard, was approved to continue serving on the AADR Committee.

B. **Undergraduate Special Opportunities in Artistry and Research (USOAR) Guidelines**

E. Seaver provided an overview of the USOAR program, explaining that the program was a funding opportunity for undergraduate students to support research and/or artistry projects, in coordination with a faculty sponsor. Students may be awarded up to $2500 to support a research or artistry project. Seaver explained that original funding for the USOAR program, $50,000, was provided through the Pepsi pouring rights agreement. However, approximately three years ago, funding for the USOAR program was discontinued through the Pepsi fund in order to reserve extra funds for student scholarships. For approximately the past three years, funding of $25,000 for the program has been provided by Vice Provost’s office. This past year, however, it was recommended by the Strategic Planning Curricular Innovations Task Force that additional funding be allocated from the strategic planning funds to support student research, so, this year, $50,000 has been allocated for the USOAR program.

Committee members were asked to look over the USOAR Guidelines and brochure and make suggestions or recommendations for changes. Seaver pointed out that a criteria change relating to senior students, as recommended by CUAE in 2008-2009 and noted below, has been the only change to the guidelines:
“Senior students who will be graduating in May are not eligible to submit a USOAR proposal unless they are returning to NIU for graduate school the immediate following fall semester. Senior students who will be graduating in December must complete USOAR projects and submit a final report before they graduate in December.”

Seaver announced that a newly hired extra help staff member will be working with the USOAR project this fall, and the brochure, guidelines, and proposal format will be published and distributed to the campus community soon. In addition, USOAR information is also available online. Seaver will provide the committee, at its October meeting, a summary and breakdown of USOAR proposals submitted and awarded during 2008-2009.

B. Henry made a motion, seconded by D. Cesarotti, to approve the Undergraduate Special Opportunities in Artistry and Research guidelines for 2009-2010. The motion passed.

C. **Review of Committee Agenda Topics and Goals for 2009-2010**

E. Seaver reviewed with committee members the schedule of CUAE agenda and discussion topics for 2009-2010. The topics were tentatively established at the committee’s last meeting in April 2009.

T. Bough questioned, after reviewing the CUAE Bylaws, whether the committee might consider future discussion and agenda topics that relate more closely to the mission set forth in the bylaws. Seaver responded that this would be a decision to be made by the committee and suggested that this be a topic of discussion at a future meeting.

W. Johnson made a motion, seconded by D. Cesarotti, to accept the Committee on the Undergraduate Academic Environment Discussion Topics and Goals for 2009-2010. The motion passed.

D. **Election of Faculty Committee Chair for 2009-2010**

E. Seaver asked for nominations for CUAE Faculty Committee Chair for 2009-2010.

D. Cesarotti made a motion, seconded by B. Henry, to nominate Tom Bough to serve as chair. The motion passed.

W. Johnson made a motion, seconded by D. Cesarotti, to close nominations and to approve Tom Bough to serve as CUAE Faculty Committee Chair for 2009-2010. The motion passed.

V. **ADJOURNMENT**
The meeting was adjourned at 2:53 p.m.

The next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, October 13, 2009, at 2:00 p.m., in Altgeld Hall 225.

Respectfully submitted,
Mollie Montgomery
Recording Secretary