Northern Illinois University

COMMITTEE ON THE UNDERGRADUATE ACADEMIC ENVIRONMENT
124th Meeting
Tuesday, October 13, 2009
Altgeld Hall 225

MINUTES
Approved

Present: J. Barakat (Student/LAS), T. Bough (VPA), J. Brunson (Ex Officio, Student Affairs), 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), M. Lenczewski (LAS), P. Munn (Substitute Representative for D. Matousek - Student/SA), E. Seaver (Ex Officio, Vice Provost), M. Stang (Ex Officio, Student Housing Services)

Absent: D. Cesarotti (EET), S. Schweitzer (Student/EDU)

Guest: T. Griffin, Ombudsman
Greg Barker, Director, Testing Services - Guest Speaker
Julia Spears, Research Associate, Office of the Vice Provost - Guest Speaker

I. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

T. Bough requested to amend the agenda to add one item, Item D. Student Committee Representative Recruitment, under Section IV. New Business.

**A motion was made by T. Bough, seconded by C. Downing, to approve the agenda with the requested addition. The motion passed.**

II. ANNOUNCEMENTS

A. Approval of Minutes

Minutes of the September 8, 2009, CUAE meeting were electronically approved.

III. OLD BUSINESS

A. USOAR Proposal Submissions – Statistics Report

E. Seaver distributed statistics on USOAR proposal submissions from 2005-2009. He noted that the largest numbers of participants have been from the College of Engineering and Engineering Technology and the College of Liberal Arts and
Sciences, although this past year has seen an increase of participation with all colleges having proposals submitted. He said that many of the funded proposals in the College of Engineering and Engineering Technology are joint proposals in which teams are working together on projects.

Seaver also announced that he has added a research associate, Dr. Julia Spears, to his staff, and she will be working with the USOAR project as well as other projects related to student engagement activities. Dr. Spears has begun efforts to increase participation in the USOAR program through various communications across campus. He added that open meeting workshops for students interested in submitting USOAR proposals are being held on October 14 and 15, 2009.

IV. NEW BUSINESS

A. Results of National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE)

E. Seaver introduced Julia Spears and Greg Barker who presented preliminary results of the NSSE (National Survey of Student Engagement) which was administered during the spring of 2009 to 1,127 first year and senior NIU students. Seaver explained that the NSSE is a comprehensive assessment of effective practice in higher education, and the survey was given in an effort to better understand our students.

Students responding to the survey are asked to answer questions relating to the following five benchmarks:

- Level of Academic Challenge
- Active and Collaborative Learning
- Student-Faculty Interaction
- Enriching Educational Experiences
- Supportive Campus Environment

Using results of the survey, a comparison of NIU and other NSSE institutions was made revealing specific trends and areas for growth as well as providing benchmarks and recommendations for improvement.

A NSSE Steering Committee has been formed, and an NIU NSSE website is being developed and will be activated soon. Data and summary reports showing the results of the survey will be posted on the website as well as a means to provide feedback to the steering committee.

B. Ombudsman’s Report

Tim Griffin, Ombudsman, presented data regarding issues brought to the Office of the Ombudsman during the past academic year. He emphasized that the data he presented to the committee should be treated as confidential. He stressed that the
Office of the Ombudsman only makes referrals to other appropriate NIU offices or individuals and does not conduct investigations or hearings. He reported that his office, over this past year, has seen increases in student issues relating to both financial concerns and academic advising concerns.

C. Fulfilling Committee Bylaws

T. Bough initiated a discussion with committee members relative to the committee’s fulfillment of the committee’s bylaws, in particular, with regard to the campus learning environment. It was suggested that future guest speakers from student support service areas be invited to speak to the committee to present overviews of their areas, such as The University Writing Center.

T. Bough also shared an appeal with the group, related to the baccalaureate review process, passed on from the dean of the College of Visual and Performing Arts, regarding the recently posted executive summary of work completed thus far by the Baccalaureate Review Task Force. He noted that there were three major areas consistently identified by the task force that it was felt NIU graduates should have: critical thinking, communication skills, and understanding of context (the “Three Cs”). The dean of the College of Visual and Performing Arts has proposed that a fourth “C” be added: creativity. T. Bough said that he shared the dean’s belief, and, from his perspective, innovation and creativity are one of the desired end results of a college degree.

E. Seaver explained how the data included in the summary was gathered and that this was a draft document for discussion. He said that the task force will be visiting various groups to present the document and receive feedback throughout the fall semester as this is still an open process to provide the opportunity for suggestions, revisions, etc., to still be made.

The suggestion was made for committee members to talk to their colleagues about this summary and the suggestion of adding the fourth “C”, Creativity. Any feedback can be reported to Greg Long, Co-chair of the Baccalaureate Review Task Force, when he speaks at the next CUAE meeting in November.

D. Student Committee Representative Recruitment

T. Bough shared concern about the lack of student representation on the committee and appealed to committee members to talk to and encourage any interested students to consider participating on the committee.

V. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 3:55 p.m.
The next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, November 10, 2009, at 2:00 p.m., in Altgeld Hall 225.

Respectfully submitted,
Mollie Montgomery
Recording Secretary