Northern Illinois University

COMMITTEE ON THE UNDERGRADUATE ACADEMIC ENVIRONMENT

131st Meeting
Tuesday, November 9, 2010
Altgeld Hall 225

MINUTES

Approved

Present: T. Bough (VPA), J. Brunson (Ex Officio, Student Affairs), D. Changnon (Ex Officio, Acting Associate Vice Provost), G. Chen (EET), C. Downing (BUS), A. Dreessen (Ex Officio, Student Involvement and Leadership Development), P. Hastings (Student/LAS), E. Hoffman (Student/EET), W. Johnson (LIB), M. Koren (HHS), D. Lotshaw (LAS), G. Schlabach (EDU/UCC Rep)

Absent: M. Koss (EDU), A. Phillips (Student/Student Association), M. Stang (Ex Officio, Student Housing Services)

Guests: T. Griffin, Ombudsman
Brian Hemphill, Vice President for Student Affairs and Enrollment Management
Julia Spears, Coordinator of Engaged Learning

(NOTE: As T. Bough was not able to be in attendance for the entire meeting, C. Downing served as Faculty Chair for that portion of the meeting that Bough was absent.)

I. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

T. Bough suggested revising the order of the agenda to hear presentations from the two guest speakers prior to the regular business meeting.

A motion was made by W. Johnson, seconded by G. Schlabach, to adopt the revised agenda. The motion carried.

II. ANNOUNCEMENTS

A. Introduction of Student Committee Member

T. Bough introduced and welcomed new student committee member, Paula Hastings, a representative of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences.

B. Approval of Minutes

A motion was made by D. Lotshaw, seconded by M. Koren, to approve the October 12, 2010, minutes of the Committee on the Undergraduate Academic
Environment meeting.  The motion carried.

III.  OLD BUSINESS

A.  Update from CUAE Subcommittee on Spirituality/Religious Growth Issue

Downing reported that the subcommittee comprised of T. Griffin, W. Johnson, M. Koren, and G. Schlabach, which was formed to research the issue of NIU courses and curriculum addressing spirituality and/or religious growth, met in October.  W. Johnson distributed the following draft language developed by the committee and asked committee members to review the language and make comments.

*It is the recommendation of the CUAE that the UCC take all actions possible to encourage the inclusion and proliferation in the NIU curriculum of courses that substantially address the values promulgated by the diverse spiritual and religious traditions of the world. Such courses will assist students in exploring their own personal values and spirituality as well as contribute to the climate of diversity and internationalism of our university community. Courses in the history and phenomenology of religion should be options for students for General Education credit, as well as available for students to take in the process of completing their major and minor requirements.*

Following a brief discussion, it was recommended that the word “creation” be added to the first sentence so that the language reads as follows:

*It is the recommendation of the CUAE that the UCC take all actions possible to encourage the creation, inclusion, and proliferation in the NIU curriculum of courses that substantially address the values promulgated by the diverse spiritual and religious traditions of the world. Such courses will assist students in exploring their own personal values and spirituality as well as contribute to the climate of diversity and internationalism of our university community. Courses in the history and phenomenology of religion should be options for students for General Education credit, as well as available for students to take in the process of completing their major and minor requirements.*

After further discussion, the following motion was made.

*A motion was made by G. Schlabach, seconded by J. Brunson, to approve the spirituality/religious growth recommendation language above, with the addition of the word “creation” to the first sentence so as to read: . . .“to encourage the creation, inclusion, and proliferation . . .”, which will serve as cover letter language to be accompanied by supporting documentation materials previously reviewed by the Committee on the Undergraduate Academic Environment.  The motion carried.*

Griffin added that it was the consensus of the subcommittee to attach the above language, which is more simple and direct, as a cover to the two pages of supporting material
previously distributed to the committee showing the need and desire and potential outcomes in terms of retention and student satisfaction.

Downing complimented the subcommittee and thanked them for their time and work on developing the recommendation language.

B. Committee Discussion: Campus Climate/Community Standards

1. Training of faculty for greater classroom control and effectiveness via Faculty Development workshop

2. Review of Dave Changnon's Proposal: NIU’s “Teaching 101: Developing Excellence in the Classroom” for new/untenured faculty

Changnon reminded the committee that these two items were part of a previous discussion the committee began at its September meeting. The related “Teaching 101” attachment distributed to the committee with the agenda packet discussed some ideas regarding an idea that evolved from some informal discussions in the Provost’s Office. Changnon suggested that discussion on these items be postponed until the February CUAE meeting and recommended that committee members review the document in preparation for that meeting. He said that this will fit in with the presentation and topic that Murali Krishnamurthi will be addressing at that meeting and would be a more positive way to move forward with further discussion on this idea. He added that he feels that Dr. Krishnamurthi can share some important ideas about how to take issues such as this to the faculty. After a short discussion, it was agreed to table further discussion on these two items until the February CUAE meeting.

IV. NEW BUSINESS

A. Enrollment Management Update/Northern Pact Overview

Brian Hemphill, Vice President for Student Affairs and Enrollment Management, provided an overview of the Northern Pact. He described that the Northern Pact was developed immediately after the February 2008 tragedy and was designed to help students to begin to understand the expectation of what it means to be a member of the NIU community and how to come together to support one another. The Pact speaks to the importance of the principles of a just, caring, open, disciplined, and celebrative community.

Hemphill went on to say students are given the opportunity to sign the Northern Pact Pledge at various events, such as Academic Convocation. He added that new undergraduate students have been the target thus far, and this year is the third year of students signing the Pact. Schlabach asked if students are given the opportunity to reinforce their Pact in future years. Hemphill responded that the importance of the Pact is reinforced throughout the year to students engaging in many programs and activities. He said that competitions related to the Northern Pact have been held, and TV commercials and video clips are run at various times throughout the year in various areas of campus.

Hastings commented that, as a transfer student, she was unaware of the Pact, and she asked if there was a means to make sure this was communicated also to transfer students.
Hemphill agreed that a better effort must be made to convey this information to transfer students. He said that not many transfer students attend Academic Convocation, and that is the largest event in which the Pact is showcased. He said he will look into working more closely with the offices that interact with transfer, commuter, and non-traditional students to increase awareness and engagement of those students in the Pact. Downing suggested that information regarding the Pact also be communicated to faculty, possibly through such means as the *Northern Today*, as there are many faculty who are also not aware of the Northern Pact. Griffin commented that faculty attending Academic Convocation do learn of the Pact, but more needs to be done to increase faculty attendance at this event.

Hemphill went on to provide the committee with an update on enrollment management. He noted that over the past year a strategic plan for enrollment management has been developed. He said enrollment has declined since 2008, primarily in traditional first-year students, although transfer student numbers continue to climb. He added that the number of high school graduates, state-wide, has declined and is expected to continue to decline until 2014. Charged by the President and Provost, Hemphill formed a task force of 45 individuals to work on developing a strategic plan to guide the institution over the next five years. Five subgroups comprise the task force, each focusing on a different aspect of enrollment management: Marketing/Branding; Recruitment; Retention; Facilities and Capacity Management; and Enrollment Target and Budget Forecasting. The Target and Budget Forecasting Subgroup will integrate reports from all the subgroups and present a final report to the full task force in December. The report will then be shared with other administrative bodies including the Provost, the President, Faculty Senate, and the Board of Trustees. Information from this report will be used in setting some of the key items to be identified and focused on in the President’s Vision2020 plan for NIU.

Hemphill said that recruitment for students has become much more competitive, and NIU’s recruitment efforts are being increased statewide, including a higher concentration in those areas that were previously considered regional, such as Rockford. He reported that the October 2010 Open House was very well attended with the highest attendance ever recorded for an October open house.

### B. Themed Learning Communities Overview

Julia Spears, Coordinator of Engaged Learning, shared with the committee information about Themed Learning Communities (TLC). She explained that the Office of Engaged Learning, a newly established office reporting to the Vice Provost, is responsible for creating engaged learning activities, primarily around themed learning communities, service learning, and under-graduate research. Themed learning communities are courses, particularly focused for incoming freshmen, clustered around a common theme. Faculty create an integrated assignment that runs across the various courses and the content of those courses, essentially providing a richer learning experience. Faculty teaching these courses are required to participate in a two-day training session to look at how to create the integrated assignments and the assessment associated with those assignments as well as some of the activities that could inform one class or the other. The courses are small, with no more than twenty-five students enrolled. Courses are scheduled back to back in either the same classroom or the same building, in the hope that this will help those students not immediately entering their
majors to begin to develop a sense of community with others in the courses and with the college during their freshman year. Two Themed Learning Communities are currently being offered during the present fall semester.

Spears went on to say that she is currently meeting with university committees, curricular deans, and department chairs to solicit ideas and discuss possible learning communities and/or themes to either target specific populations of students or a particular major or department where an influx of students is being seen. The aim is to be more intentional about how the themed learning communities are structured, based on what departments and colleges are hearing from their students and what clusters of courses currently being offered have been identified by faculty. The goal is to have courses and themed learning communities for fall 2011 identified by this coming December. Spears said that the courses are open to anyone, and various means will be used to communicate information to students.

Spears summarized that the objective of the theme learning communities is to create a rich experience for students and help them build connections with faculty, peers, colleges, and content of the course.

C. **CUAE Representative to Serve on the Affirmative Action and Diversity Resources Committee for Spring 2011 Semester**

Wendell Johnson volunteered to continue serving as the CUAE representative on the Affirmative Action and Diversity Resources Committee for the spring 2011 semester. No objections were heard.

V. **ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 3:30 p.m. The next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, February 8, 2011, at 2:00 p.m., in Altgeld Hall 225.

Respectfully submitted,
Mollie Montgomery