Present: A. Birberick (Ex Officio, Vice Provost), K. Bak (Student Association), G. Chen (EET), K, Chung (HHS), W. Johnson (LIB), J. Jones (Ex Officio, Associate Vice President, Student Affairs), R. Layfield (Campus Activities Board), M. Manderino (EDU), M. Mehrer (LAS), G. Schlabach (EDU/UCC Rep), D. Sinason (BUS), M. Stang (Ex Officio, Student Housing Services), B. Wardell (VPA), J. Zambito (Ex Officio, Student Involvement and Leadership Development)

Absent: J. Camery (Student/EDU)

Guests: T. Griffin, Ombudsman
Denise Rode, Director, Orientation and First-Year Experience
K. Melvin, Assistant Director Orientation and First-Year Experience

I. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

A motion was made by Schlabach, seconded by Johnson, to adopt the agenda with minor changes. The motion carried.

II. ANNOUNCEMENTS

A. Approval of Minutes

A motion was made by Johnson, seconded by Schlabach, to approve the November 8, 2011, minutes of the Committee on the Undergraduate Academic Environment meeting. The motion passed with three abstentions.

B. Introduction of New Committee Members
Birberick welcomed the new members of the committee and asked everyone to introduce themselves. Sinason will be filling in for Downing and Wardell will be filling in for Bough in Spring 2012.

C. General Education Coordinator
Birberick announced the position and that the search was underway.
III. OLD BUSINESS

A. Selection of Faculty Chair for 2011-2012
D. Sinason was elected by acclamation as CUAE Faculty chair for Spring 2012.

B. Committee Discussion: Role of CUAE
The committee returned to discuss the two areas that Downing had suggested it might pursue: spirituality and accountability.

A brief history and background on the spirituality statement was provided to update the new members. This semester, there is a living learning floor in one of the residence halls focused on spirituality. Birberick indicated that the Phil 170 course had been picked up as an ILAS course and there might be a faculty member interested in teaching it. Sinason indicated he would contact the Chair of the Philosophy Department, D. Buller, for information. Bak talked about highlighting the different religious organizations on campus as well as offering a film and speaker series.

The members next addressed the accountability issue. Discussion about amending the teaching evaluation form to include a question about respectful and civil faculty behavior ensued. There was a brief side discussion on teaching evaluations and the poor response rate now that the evaluations are moving to a digital format. It was suggested that the CUAE approach Downing, who is a member of the UC, with a motion to present to that body.

The following motion was made.

“CUAE moves to ask Charles Downing to bring to the University Council a question, which should be included on all course evaluations, to the effect that the instructor of record showed respect to the students.”

Sinason moved, seconded by Bak to adopt the motion. 5 approved; 0 opposed; 2 abstentions. The motion carried.

Sinason indicated he would talk to Downing about the CUAE’s motion.

IV. NEW BUSINESS

A. UNIV 101/Foundations of Excellence/ Sophomore Year Experience: Denise Rode, Guest Speaker
Rode updated the committee on First-Year Experience and the Foundations of Excellence. She provided each member with a draft of the Foundations of Excellence report as well as a printed copy of the 2011 Annual Report of the First-Year Experience. With respect to the latter, she highlighted specific programs in the report, such as UNIV 101. Institutional
research data on UNIV 101 show that about 60% of the new students take the course. At present, there is not a great difference in GPA between the students who enroll in the course and those who do not. Rode indicated that further inquiry into this would be conducted.

There was discussion of the draft of the Foundations of Excellence. Griffin asked about the bullet point related to class attendance policies. Chen asked for a definition of what constituted a “high impact activity.” Rode provided examples of current practices of such activities on NIU’s campus.

Rode discussed a new initiative: the sophomore year experience. There was a sophomore summit in January 2012. What followed was general discussion regarding issues faced by sophomore students and how faculty perceives the sophomore year. Topics raised were: sense of disconnectedness; need for integration of high impact activities; when sophomores first take classes in their selected majors; impact of limited admission programs and the need to have alternate plans; what skill sets students need to survive. The sophomore experience focus will be on four aspects: residence halls, advising (academic), leadership, and career planning.

Chen indicated the need to nourish a “Huskie” spirit at NIU and asked Rode if we were doing anything in that direction. Stang responded that we are trying to build new traditions on campus. Zambito spoke about Welcome Days and how there was a move to make it campus-wide and collaborative with events that students would attend together.

Another initiative is a pilot program for Orientation. This will involve 150 new students, predominately freshman, who will attend a 2 ½ day extended workshop. This workshop will take place before Welcome Days.

Before leaving, Rode spoke about the project to have members of the NIU community write their own “This I Believe” essay. The details of the project can be found on the Orientation website. She raffled off a copy of This I Believe, which Schlabach won.

V. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 3:50 p.m. The next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, March 20, 2012, beginning at 2:00 p.m., in Altgeld Hall 225.