Northern Illinois University

COMMITTEE ON THE UNDERGRADUATE ACADEMIC ENVIRONMENT

147th Meeting
Tuesday, September 10, 2013

MINUTES

APPROVED

Present: A. Birberick (Ex Officio, Vice Provost), T. Bough (VPA), K. Chung (HHS), K. Gasser (LAS), W. Johnson (LIB), V. Krishnan Palghat (BUS), W. Pitney (EDUC), M. Stang (Ex Officio, Student Housing Services),

Absent: J. Zambito (Ex Officio, Student Involvement and Leadership Development)

I. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

W. Pitney made a motion to accept the agenda adding Annual report approval under New Business, seconded by V. Krishnan Palghat. The motion passed unanimously.

II. INTRODUCTION OF COMMITTEE MEMBERS

All those present introduced themselves.

III. ELECTION OF COMMITTEE FACULTY CHAIR

Birberick opened the floor for nominations for the faculty chair of the committee. K. Chung was nominated by W. Pitney. Hearing no other nominations, Birberick indicated Chung was elected by acclamation. The motion passed unanimously.

IV. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

W. Pitney made a motion to approve the minutes from the April 9, 2013 meeting, seconded by K. Gasser. Bough asked that for the spring semester the minutes reflect he was on sabbatical rather than absent from the meetings. Motion passed unanimously with that amendment to the minutes.

V. OLD BUSINESS

Pitney talked about the discussions that began last academic year in which the possibility of integrating CUAE and CIUE (Committee on the Improvement of Undergraduate Education) were brought up. Part of the rationale behind the discussions being that some responsibilities of CIUE had been diminished because of some budget cuts and this committee seemed to struggle to find actionable items and things to move on. The chairs of
the two committees along with a few members from UCC meet and talked about the possible integration. The discussion included what the composition of the committee would look like making sure to be sensitive to representation – students, colleges, etc. and looked at what aspects of the committees overlapped, what could be melded together. Pitney drafted that information and forwarded it to Birberick. Birberick indicated that she was unable to proceed further during the summer but wants to bring the topic back again this year and continue the work of the subcommittee to examine the committee structure and determine if any kind of consolidation is possible. Once the subcommittee does some additional work, the issue with be brought for discussion to all relevant parties.

V. NEW BUSINESS

A. Annual Report Approval

Birberick indicated the report was written by Pitney and was included in the annual report of the UCC which was sent to the University Council. Pitney indicated that he organized the report more along chronological lines. He captured the main points and included the letter sent to Kelly Wesener and Michael Stang about the facility evaluation along with the Philosophy Statement the committee approved.

On a motion by Pitney, seconded by Bough, the annual report was unanimously approved.

B. Topics for 2013-2014 Meetings

Birberick stated that this is typically when the committee decides what they will focus on for the year. Bough referred everyone to the committee’s bylaws. He pointed to the duties of the committee and said they are clear and the years in which the committee has been effective were times when they stuck close to them. Birberick said student housing is one of the items listed and Bough agreed that was one of the issues the committee has been very consistent in focusing on. Bough asked Stang if he had any input. Stang indicated that he would be happy to show the committee anything it wanted to take a look at. He offered a tour of the newly renovated Gilbert Hall. He added that often the committee offered suggestions on things that were not renovated rather than the best things. He pointed out that last year’s tour included a variety of facilities; some new and some not. Bough asked if the letter written by the committee last year was helpful. Stang indicated the letter was not unhelpful but his sense is that any large-scale plans are on hold until the campus master plan is redeveloped. Stang said there’s value in many areas and not only do we have quality options but also we offer affordable options for the students. When asked, Stang said that it might be beneficial for the committee to invite someone from Financial Aid in to discuss that aspect of the student experience. There will continue to be
conversations on how the university tries to make the experience affordable. It may give the committee another avenue to pursue. How does on-campus housing work for our students and what are the alternatives and in addition what barriers do the students face. Committee members were agreeable to that topic. Birberick suggested contacting Rebecca Babel to present the information.

Birberick suggested that since there is a new Vice President of Student Affairs and Enrollment Management that Dr. Weldy be invited to talk about his vision/approach. Others agreed.

Bough pointed committee members to the Bylaws, page 2, under duties- item B. He doesn’t think the committee has ever addressed item B. He said as he talks to colleagues around campus there are some substantial facilities issues: leaky floors, barriers in the center of the room, bad lighting, single access doors, etc. Pitney added that he was in a building today where the ceiling tiles had come unglued and were all over the floor. He indicated some of the academic buildings have some severe issues. Birberick mentioned inviting Greg Long who chairs the Presidential Commission on Persons with Disabilities. He has led the charge about access. That commission has been very aggressive in dealing with access issues by mapping out what the barriers are on campus. She suggested that this committee might then want to focus on a specific area or aspect. Birberick also proposed the committee could go out and look at specific areas – choose a cause. Pitney suggested they could follow the same format as with the housing issue, collecting visual evidence in order to make recommendations. He said perhaps select a few of the main academic buildings – he mentioned DuSable which has many multi-purpose classrooms that are used for majors and Gen Ed classes. Pitney suggested perhaps looking at a newly remodeled building like Cole Hall and then another building, maybe Anderson and see if someone was available to talk about some of the recent renovations and give the committee an idea of what buildings might be repurposed, etc. Kolb suggested perhaps someone from the University Council budget and space committee could come in and give a general overview of the issues and perhaps fill the committee in on the master plan or someone from Finance and Facilities. Kolb said he could check on the appropriate UC committee.

V. Krishnan Palghat suggested obtaining information on what learning communities exist on campus. He wondered if there are enough to cover the interests/aspirations of the incoming students or students in general; perhaps including the academic effectiveness of the communities if that information exists.

Birberick mentioned that NIU will have a new police chief and in the past that individual has come to speak to the committee. He could be invited.
Bough suggested Denise Rode and her group. UNIV 101 is curricular but they also focus on helping students get involved, etc. Birberick indicated that her group is also in charge of the second year experience which is only in its second year. Bough added that the statistical data of the impact of UNIV is astounding as it applies to retention and GPA, etc.

There was more discussion on the committee exploring facilities independently. Several members mentioned looking at buildings on Garden road, where Barsema, the Engineering building and Anderson are all located. Birberick suggested that the tours be done during the fall since the weather will be more predictable.

Depending on individual schedules, Dr. Weldy and Denise Rode will be invited for the spring. The committee will try to arrange for Rebecca Babel to come either Oct. 8th or Nov. 12th.

VI. ADJOURNMENT

W. Johnson made a motion to adjourn @ 2:50 p.m., seconded by K. Gasser. Motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Jeanne Ratfield