Present:  P. Brown (BUS), S. Conklin (HHS), J. Corwin (LAS), L. Derscheid (HHS), A. Doederlein (LAS), E. Fredericks (BUS), W. Goldenberg (VPA), C. T. Lin (LAS), M. Mehrer (LAS), S. Ouellette (HHS), D. Rusin (LAS), E. Seaver (Vice Provost), L. Townsend (EDU), M. Van Wienen (LAS), P. Webb (LIB), E. Wilkins (EDU)

Absent: N. Boubekri (EET), J. Gau (EET), B. Hart (VPA)
Students:  D. Smith (SA), Scott Zondag (BUS)

Guest: Donna Smith, Catalog Editor/Curriculum Coordinator

I. Adoption of Agenda

E. Seaver asked to move agenda item III. E., Report of the Undergraduate Academic Environment Committee, to be the first item on the agenda, before item III. A., under Section III.

A motion to approve the revised agenda was made and seconded. The motion carried.

II. Announcements

A. Electronic Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the December 2, 2005, meeting were distributed, and members were asked to send electronic approval.

III. Reports/Minutes from Standing Committees

A. Admissions Policies and Academic Standards Committee – E. Seaver

E. Seaver reported that these minutes reflect a number of catalog changes relating to requirements in courses for students entering specific majors, changes in minimum grade point averages, etc. All of the course requirement changes noted in these minutes were discussed and approved.

The one other topic addressed by the committee was the continuation of discussion on the committee’s concern about the wording of the catalog language for the Academic Advising Center on page 41 of the catalog as it relates to the word “consult.”
M. Van Wienen commented that the specific changes in major requirements connect with a discussion that UCC had previously as to how, in turn, each program seems to be raising admission standards for their particular programs such as having a minimum grade point average higher than that required for graduation by the university at large. He noted that this has the possible result of having a certain number of students who can stay academically eligible but essentially don’t have any major from which they can graduate.

A. Doederlein provided an overview on how limited admission programs receive approval. He also pointed out that procedures exist for obtaining approval of limited retention requirements, however; these are not currently listed in the catalog.

E. Seaver noted the procedures for both limited admission and limited retention programs are articulated in the Academic Policies and Procedures Manual (APPM) not only for the initial granting of a limited admission/limited retention program but also for the renewal of both during program review. Both APASC and UCC have final approval of these requests.

In response to M. Van Wienen’s concern, E. Seaver said departments may add courses periodically to raise requirements. Those then come through APASC in which APASC asks for rationale; then it has to come through UCC each time. E. Seaver noted that these things are not discussed lightly at APASC, and, where appropriate, the committee does ask for some background. The programs must also address such things as how this will affect students and how it will affect students from underrepresented groups. There are a number of different types of questions that must be responded to in addition to the resource issue. Those are all part of the initial approval and re-approval processes.

L. Townsend commented that M. Van Wienen is looking at a broader issue and that is taking the student’s perspective and looking comparatively at the grade point average requirements in one major, in any course across campus. She indicated that it seems that students could meet the requirements of the university in terms of grade points and still not be able to graduate. E. Seaver said that the ultimate concern in his office from a retention standpoint is that if everybody now has to have a 2.5 minimum grade point average to be in, why do we have 2.0 as a minimum requirement for retention? He continued by saying that if everybody decides to go to a 2.5 because they want to limit the number of students in classes, etc., then, essentially, anybody can be in this university and graduate with a 2.0, although it’s really a 2.5. That issue presents a great deal of worry to the vice provost’s office as these are looked at. The provost’s office looks at data to see how many of these students will be affected, how many of them are not going to be there, and what potential ramification this might have on our overall graduation rate.

D. Rusin asked if there was data available to show what percentage of students actually do finish at NIU with a grade
point average of 2.0. E. Seaver said the university does have that data. D. Rusin said that he has the sense that many of the students could have a grade point average of 2.00, but they are not on academic probation but less than 2.5, so they are having trouble getting into some of these limited admission programs. These students seem to fall out somewhere along the way; then you starting thinking maybe we should have a higher grade point average.

E. Seaver said that we do know that many students who leave this university who do not make it through for a degree are in good standing when they leave here, that includes first and second year, including students who even leave after four years. He thinks that what happens in some cases is that they do get in that 2.0-2.5 range and can’t find a major, so they leave. Students either can’t find a major that is of interest to them or they find a major and they’ve already had two years invested, maybe three; they look at the new major and see that it’s going to take them another two to three years. They start to add up their debt, multiply two more years, and find they can’t afford school any longer. It’s hard to tell how many students are affected this way, because we do not interview all students when they leave. However, he does think it has an impact, particularly on those students who are somewhere between 2.0-2.5. If we continue to see this increase of limited admission and limited retention programs and minimum grade point averages, we’re going to see more of that. Of particular concern to the provost’s office is when programs come back and add grade point average requirements in upper division courses, saying that a student must have a C or better in all of these courses – not a C average – but in all of these courses. Some of these students might not be taking some of those upper division courses until they are a senior, so they could be at 90 hours and looking for another major. When these requests come through, the provost’s office reviews data and tries to determine what the implication would be and impact on students at 60 hours, 90 hours, etc., and also what would be the impact on other programs such as students flooding to other programs that don’t have the same requirements.

E. Seaver stated that the faculty committees, APASC and UCC, in the last few years have been much more aware of these kinds of issues, and it’s been tougher to get these things through without a lot of questions about the impact on students. Ultimately, this is not a provost office issue, other than the resource issue, but this is an issue of APASC and UCC to make these decisions as to how willing they want to be in terms of passing these kinds of changes.

M. Van Wienen commented that the trend is certainly in the direction of more programs having the additional hurdles to clear in their programs rather than fewer; we are getting more programs with higher than university admission requirements to get into these programs. There are few rejections of these requests.

E. Seaver said there seems to a slowing of the programs now coming through as the process has been made more rigorous. It is not something that can be done without considerable discussion.
Also, by putting in place the approval process for limited retention programs has helped. The deans, as well, are essentially the ones who are the liaison to the provost as it relates to resources, and it really should be a resource issue. From the standpoint of the provost’s office, the resource issue should be the driving factor; that’s when the dean has to decide – there are lots of ways to deal with resource issues in a college.

A. Doederlein noted that there is an attempt in his department, although not ideal, to deal with this problem. His department has what they term an “exit preparation” process in which they warn students if there is a real risk in finishing coursework.

E. Seaver made a motion to receive the November 30, 2005, minutes of the Admissions Policies and Academic Standards Committee meeting. The motion carried.

Relative to UCC’s request at its December 1, 2005, meeting for further clarification of catalog language changes concerning the Academic Advising Center, E. Seaver stated that on January 26, 2006, a memorandum and materials were distributed to UCC members relating to the content of the catalog language for the Academic Advising Center. E. Seaver reviewed the catalog language materials with UCC members, and reported that this information was also shared with APASC at its February 1, 2006, meeting. He stated that, although minutes are yet available from the February 1, 2006, APASC meeting, APASC reviewed the materials, and additional information will be coming to UCC from APASC via minutes from the next meeting. David Wade, Faculty Chair, of APASC, will also be available to attend the next UCC meeting to answer questions relative to APASC.

M. Van Wienen pointed out one correction that needed to be made on page 10 of the catalog language change document.

B. General Education Committee – D. Rusin

Although there were no minutes to receive, E. Seaver reported that the committee met on January 19, 2006, and is discussing the assessment plan for general education. There are a couple of resubmissions that will be reviewed; however, the committee is spending most of its time concentrating on the assessment plan.

D. Rusin also reported that at the last GEC meeting a guest from Testing Services attended and discussed how a testing package for ACT could be used in the assessment process.

C. Honors Committee – L. Derscheid

L. Derscheid reported that the Honors Committee heard reports from the Director and Assistant Director. Per the request of UCC, included in the December 2, 2005, Honors Committee minutes was a breakdown of the number of Honors Students by majors. It was suggested that, since this is not already done, it might be
helpful to have a list of honors students distributed to colleges. E. Seaver will follow up with this.

The Program Coordinator’s Report included a report on issues relating to vandalism in the Honors Housing facility, finalization of spring programming and plans for a spring field trip. The committee also discussed two EYE Grant Proposals. After adjournment of the formal meeting, Dr. Robert Spurrier, consultant to the honors program, met with members of the Honors Committee regarding future goals and issues.

L. Derscheid made a motion to receive the, December 2, 2005, minutes of the University Honors Committee. The motion passed.

D. Committee on the Improvement of Undergraduate Education – M. Van Wienen

Although there were no minutes to receive, M. Van Wienen reported that committee members had received packets of CIUE grant proposals and were in the process of reviewing those proposals.

A. Doederlein pointed out that there were two different deadline dates publicized in the nomination form and guidelines for the Excellence in Undergraduate Teaching and Excellence in Undergraduate Instruction Award. M. Van Wienen said that it was his understanding that all the deadlines were going to be the same and coordinated as such. He said he thought one of the dates was most likely a typographical error, and he will bring this to the attention of the committee at the next meeting.

E. Committee on the Undergraduate Academic Environment – C. T. Lin

C. T. Lin reported on the November 8, 2005, meeting of the CUAE. He reported that a chair had been selected, and goals for the committee for 2005-2006 were reviewed. In conjunction with the goals previously set, the committee discussed looking at the campus parking situation. The committee will invite Bob Albanese, Associate Vice President for Finance and Facilities to speak to the group on this issue. Also, Rena Cotsones, NIU Executive Director of Community Relations, will be invited to talk to the committee about the City of DeKalb/NIU relationship as the committee looks at ways in which to generate a more student friendly city environment. Student focus groups may also be utilized to provide a student perspective.

C. T. Lin also reported that the committee listened to a presentation of the overview of the Division of Student Affairs by Brian Hemphill, Vice President of Student Affairs, as well receiving a report from Tim Griffin, NIU Ombudsman.

C. T. Lin made a motion to receive the November 8, 2005, minutes of the Committee on the Undergraduate Academic Environment. The motion passed.
F. Committee on the Undergraduate Curriculum – W. Goldenberg

Although there were no minutes to receive, W. Goldenberg reported that the committee will be contacting all of the Advising Deans and collecting a list of the contract majors. He also noted that catalog deadlines are coming soon.

IV. Other Reports

A. University Assessment Panel – P. Webb

(There was no report.)

V. Old Business

A. Selection of UCC Student Representative to the University Assessment Panel

Kim Eckmann, College of Education Student Representative, volunteered to serve as UCC Student Representative on the University Assessment Panel.

A motion was made and seconded to approve Kim Eckmann as the Undergraduate Coordinating Council student representative to the University Assessment Panel for 2005-2006. The motion passed.

VI. New Business

A. Update on Online Catalog

Donna Smith, Catalog Editor/Curriculum Coordinator, reported that proofs for the Graduate Catalog have gone out to the colleges for review; the deadline for revisions is Thursday, February 9, 2006. She is presently working on the undergraduate catalog, and proofs will go out within the next couple of weeks. She said that the company that is providing the software for the online catalog will be handling the layout for the catalogs this year. Also, she will be meeting with Bob Burk, Director of Admissions, soon to discuss the number of catalogs to be published in printed format. E. Seaver noted that printed catalogs are still necessary and will be available; however, the number of catalogs actually printed will be significantly fewer than in the past.

B. Update on Student Information System

E. Seaver gave an update on the status of the Student Information Systems implementation. The implementation process is now in the organizational stages. An update will be available to this committee at a later date as progress is made in this process. The entire implementation process will take approximately two years, and it is planned that the system will go live for the
fall 2008 admitting cycle, which means the new system will be up and running in the spring of 2008.

VII. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 2:05 p.m. The next UCC meeting is scheduled for Thursday, March 2, 2006, beginning at 1:00 p.m. in Altgeld Hall 203.

Respectfully submitted,
Mollie Keller