Northern Illinois University
UNDERGRADUATE COORDINATING COUNCIL
141ST Meeting
Thursday, April 6, 2006
Altgeld Hall 203

MINUTES
(Approved)

Present: P. Brown (BUS), N. Boubekri (EET), S. Conklin (HHS), L. Derscheid (HHS), E. Fredericks (BUS), W. Goldenberg (VPA), B. Hart (VPA), C. T. Lin (LAS), M. Mehrer (LAS), S. Ouellette (HHS), D. Rusin (LAS), L. Townsend (EDU), M. Van Wienen (LAS), P. Webb (LIB), E. Wilkins (EDU)

Absent: J. Corwin (LAS), A. Doederlein (LAS), J. Gau (EET), E. Seaver (Vice Provost)

Students: D. Smith (SA), K. Eckmann (EDUC), D. Kettlestrings (LAS), S. Zondag (BUS)

Guest: Donna Smith, Catalog Editor/Curriculum Coordinator

I. Adoption of Agenda
In the absence of E. Seaver and A. Doederlein, D. Rusin served in the capacity of chair.

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

II. Announcements
A. Electronic Approval of Minutes
The minutes of the March 2, 2006, meeting were electronically approved.

III. Reports/Minutes from Standing Committees
A. Admissions Policies and Academic Standards Committee – N. Boubekri

N. Boubekri reported on the March 29, 2006, APASC meeting, although minutes are not yet available. He reported that approval was given for each of three requests for renewal of limited admissions, and D. Wade announced to APASC that UCC approved the APASC recommendation of the composition and reporting line of the Faculty Oversight Committee for the Academic Advising Center. He also noted that D. Wade reported to the committee that some Faculty Senate members are again raising questions concerning the plus/minus grading.

B. General Education Committee – E. Wilkins

E. Wilkins reported that at the February 16, 2006, GEC meeting, the committee looked at various assessment instruments that are currently in place to collect data, viewing them from an assessment standpoint. In addition, the submission of a course, ILAS 100, for general education credit was discussed. The committee also addressed the issue of diversity in general education. Executive Vice President and Provost Ivan Legg and Deb Pierce, Executive Director of International Programs, both spoke to the committee regarding the topic of diversity. The committee will continue to look at the general education curriculum and how the components that deal with diversity fit into the curriculum.
E. Wilkins made a motion to accept the February 16, 2006, minutes of the General Education Committee. The motion passed.

C. Honors Committee – L. Derscheid

L. Derscheid reported on the March 3, 2006, meeting of the University Honors Committee. She said that the director reported working with 20 capstones and approving 44 capstone proposals. Also, 2000 invitations to join the Honors Program were sent to current NIU students with a 3.5 GPA or higher. The assistant director reported working at the open house in February, speaking to visiting high school groups, and working with Public Affairs, as well as giving a report on enrollment figures, which showed a decrease during the time period from 2003 to 2006. The program coordinator’s report included spring programming and a schedule of events. The committee also reviewed two EYE grant proposals and additional funding for a previously awarded EYE grant proposal. In addition, the full Consultant’s Report from the consultant hired last fall to review the Honors Program was received. M. Martin, Director, Honors Program, spoke to the group about the need for more honors seminars and honors classes. In new business, the committee discussed the peer advisor positions and what could be done to improve in this area.

D. Rusin asked if there were mechanisms in place to recruit incoming freshmen to the Honors Program. L. Derscheid said that contact with freshmen is made during campus open houses.

M. Van Wienen asked about the current state of the Honors Program and whether it was in a state of decline. L. Derscheid said she thought that the program’s goal was for about 1,000 students, and, as shown in Table 4, Current Active Honors Enrollment by College (attachment to Honors minutes) in March 2006, the enrollment is 1,003. She said that if the program takes on too many more students than that, there are not enough honors sections. W. Goldenberg pointed out that M. Martin said it would be even better if there were even fewer students because it is difficult to convince departments to use teaching time to teach honors courses, and funding is not available to pay faculty for teaching honors courses. C. T. Lin asked about the idea of forming an honors college which had been discussed at an earlier point in time. L. Derscheid answered that the student body would have to increase and that there is not financial support available at this time for that type of undertaking.

D. Rusin said that it is UCC’s role to oversee how the standing committees of UCC interact and suggested that UCC may want to send a message or recommendation to the Honors Committee or Provost. W. Goldenberg said that it is difficult to get courses taught in real Honors; students become frustrated if the courses are normal courses and they are asked only to write an extra paper to receive the honors designation, which is not really a supported program.

C. T. Lin commented that some colleges already have undergraduate research programs which are very much like a capstone, although it is not really an honors course. D. Rusin commented that maybe UCC needs to recommend greater cooperation with departments in seeing that those students who are already doing something that would typically be what an honors student would do would eventually get the two for one.

L. Derscheid commented that the purpose of having an outside consultant come last fall was to visit with many areas of campus to acquire some input on the availability of resources for the program. D. Rusin noted that the Honors minutes referred to an executive summary of the consultant’s report, and he asked if that could be distributed to members of UCC. L. Derscheid said that she would provide that to be forwarded to UCC members. D. Rusin also suggested inviting M. Martin, Director of University Honors, to attend the next UCC meeting.
M. Van Wienen made a motion, seconded by L. Townsend, to invite Michael Martin, Director, University Honors Program, to attend the next meeting, May 4, 2006, or the first meeting of the Fall 2006 semester, of the Undergraduate Coordinating Council to report on the state of the Honors Program. The motion passed.

N. Boubekri commented that he was wondering if there has been any problem as to the structure and content of the honors program as it is because of some of the observations that have been made and enrollment decline. He suggested that the consultant’s report could be a guide for the program. He asked what kind of structuring was in place for the program noting that it would be helpful for UCC to know what is being done in the program, what kind of requirements there are, what constitutes an “honors student”, etc. He surmised that if students may be reluctant to enroll in these courses it may be because it is a perception; students don’t perceive this program to be valuable for them. He said he assumes that a true honors program is there, and students are just not attracted to it. He suggested that, in addition to reviewing the consultant’s report, a committee be formed to determine if there is a true honors program in place and why it is or is not attracting students. He said that it is important to put together an honors program benchmarking other schools. L. Derscheid indicated that it was her understanding that M. Martin had submitted that kind of information to the consultant and had looked at his self-evaluation of the program as compared to several other kinds of programs. The consultant used that data, as well as that gathered from various other campus offices, to make his evaluation and report. She said those kinds of questions could be addressed to M. Martin.

L. Derscheid made a motion to accept the March 3, 2006, minutes of the University Honors Committee. The motion passed.

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

M. Van Wienen reported that at the March 20, 2006, of the CIUE meeting Katharina Barbe, Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures, Lisa Finkelstein, Department of Psychology, and David Gunkel, Department of Communication, were chosen as the winners of the 2006 Excellence in Undergraduate Teaching Awards. In addition, Joseph Bonomo, Department of English, was chosen as the first recipient of the new Excellence in Undergraduate Instruction award. M. Van Wienen expressed appreciation to UCC for the approval to go ahead with the new award and to Vice Provost Seaver for securing funding.

D. Rusin noted that CIUE expressed some concern about the process for the new award, and he asked if there was some way in which UCC could facilitate addressing those concerns. M. Van Wienen said that the guidelines for this award will be revised, and any discussion pertaining to that will be reflected in the CIUE minutes next fall. He explained that in the process of writing the description for each award and refining the documents through the oversight of several committees, the document has become very difficult to decipher. The CIUE committee has assigned a subcommittee the undertaking of a thorough revision of the templates and instructions for each award. The content of the award will not be changed, only revisions will be made for clarification and consistency.

M. Van Wienen also reported that in the next CIUE meeting minutes it will be reflected that student members of CIUE raised the issue that they thought it would be helpful for students to have available online, the syllabi of various classes, especially multi-section classes, which they could review when selecting courses, with the idea of being able to suit their own learning styles or preferences to the classes when they decide what they’re going to register for. CIUE did vote approval to receive input from UCC on whether this would be a way to improve on undergraduate education. The CIUE is interested in exploring the idea and obtaining feedback from UCC as whether to pursue this.
M. Van Wienen made a motion to accept the March 20, 2006, minutes of the Committee on the Improvement of Undergraduate Education. The motion passed.

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

There was no report.

F. Committee on the Undergraduate Curriculum – W. Goldenberg

W. Goldenberg reported that at the March 9, 2006, meeting of the Committee on the Undergraduate Curriculum it was announced that President Peters approved the name change for the Department of Industrial Engineering (IENG) to the Department of Industrial and Systems Engineering (ISYE) and that in the future a proposal for a Diversity Certificate may be forthcoming. He also reported that the Honors Program in Accountancy has been deleted due to low enrollment as a result of the lack of electives available with the program. In other action, the committee reviewed two courses in History, which actually were the same course but carried different numbers; the courses were renumbered to have the same number with an “H” added to designate the honors section.

W. Goldenberg made a motion to accept the March 9, 2006, minutes of the Committee on the Undergraduate Curriculum. The motion passed.

L. Derscheid noted that CUC revisited the College of Health and Human Sciences Minutes #1, which contained revisions to the Military Science program. The HHS minutes were approved earlier during this academic year without the Military Science changes having received formal consideration of CUC; this was due to the changes being listed as graduate catalog changes rather than undergraduate. At the March 9, 2006, meeting CUC did approve the revised minutes with the correct undergraduate changes. The changes were then approved via electronic vote by the Undergraduate Coordinating Council on March 21, 2006.

IV. Other Reports

A. University Assessment Panel – P. Webb

Although no notes from the last meeting were available, P. Webb reported that the committee reviewed a funding request from Housing and Dining to purchase technology devices in conjunction with conducting a traffic flow pattern report in order to get an idea of the busy times of traffic flow. He noted that funding requests submitted to the panel are asked to provide information showing that they are related directly to the assessment of outcomes.

V. Old Business

There was no old business.

VI. New Business

A. Diversity in General Education

N. Boubekri asked a question relating to the General Education Committee and its discussion on the issue of diversity. He asked if the committee was looking at diversity in
terms of numbers in ethnic groups relating to students, faculty, etc., or if they were also looking at other issues of diversity such as how to present materials in the classroom, teaching methods, etc. He indicated that, after reviewing some diversity literature and attending workshops, he is under the impression that is also what diversity is about – how to increase student population from different groups, as well as methods of engaging students and how to design a curriculum for a diverse population in order to address their learning abilities. He questioned whether these issues are being addressed by the General Education Committee.

B. Wilkins responded that the GEC committee had the very same questions that Dr. Boubekri was asking, and that was the reason that the committee encouraged Dr. Legg to address GEC to define what he meant by diversity, in conjunction with the fact that the committee’s main focus this year was on the assessment of general education. She explained that there are certain goals and guidelines that are asked for when approval or reapproval of a course for general education credit is requested as well as looking at how diversity fits into that current structure.

E. Fredericks commented that attending NIU’s diversity workshop is a good way to understand what NIU considers to be diversity here. Emphasis is put on the fact that ethnicity is only one part of diversity; the whole spectrum of what is considered to be diversity includes other aspects as well such as sexual orientation, religion, culture, etc. Those aspects are looked at first, and then later instructional methods to address a diverse group are looked at. Looking at only ethnicity as diversity is common, and the diversity workshop helps expand one’s mind to look at all issues. Instruction was also a small part of the workshop.

D. Smith commented that, with regard to general education, Dr. Legg proposed to either add a course that students would have to take that would deal with diversity or incorporate more diverse examples into the courses already being taught. E. Fredericks indicated that the committee has just started to address this issue.

N. Boubekri stated that the methodology of the content of the courses has to be consistent with other things that are done in so far as diversity, making it a total package. He pointed out that if certain types of people are being attracted to an institution, user tools must also be delivered for them to be able to absorb the knowledge that is being delivered to them. He went on to say that he thinks the two have to go hand in hand, and, in order to do service to what it is, diversity has to be addressed as if it were an issue that can be scientifically addressed and not just one large social issue.

D. Rusin stated that general education courses must follow the process of courses being approved and reapproved, but the process is limited to the general education courses. He noted that the question raised by N. Boubekri relates to the diversity of the student body and/or faculty members and how the two are generally connected, which is not something that the GEC would control. He asked if this was something that N. Boubekri would like the UCC to pursue or to request further information about. N. Boubekri said that he thinks UCC should look at the issue further, possibly in terms of an outline, to determine how UCC as a body thinks about diversity, or possibly have another committee pursue the issue.

C. T. Lin suggested that the Committee on the Undergraduate Academic Environment (CUAE) might be the appropriate committee to pursue this. He indicated that he thought the CUAE had looked at the issue a few years ago. D. Rusin suggested that past minutes of the CUAE committee be reviewed to see what information that committee may already have gathered. He noted also that data and statistical summaries are also available from the website of the Office of Institutional Research.
S. Conklin pointed out that the Task Force on Multicultural Transformation is a resource, as well, that helps faculty members transform their courses to incorporate diversity and that many faculty members have participated in this training over the past several years.

N. Boubekri commented that the university, in making attempts to be internationalized and attract students from different parts of the country and the world, does need to take a hard look at diversifying the curriculum, in terms of how it can be understood by people of truly different backgrounds, rather than just looking at statistics.

VII. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 2:05 p.m. The next UCC meeting is scheduled for Thursday, May 4, 2006, beginning at 1:00 p.m. in Altgeld Hall 203.

Respectfully submitted,
Mollie Keller