MINUTES
Approved

Present: D. Ballantine (LAS), R. Beatty (BUS), B. Broughton (Student/LAS), S. Conklin (HHS), J. Corwin (LAS), W. Goldenberg (VPA), D. Gorman (LAS), B. Hart (VPA), J. Isabel (HHS), R. Kilaparti (EET), M. Kostic (EET), C. Malecki (LAS), S. Ouellette (HHS), D. Shernoff (EDU), E. Wilkins (EDU), J. Wolfskill (LAS/Substitute for A. Doederlein)

Absent: A. Doederlein (LAS), J. Hansen (BUS), E. Phillips (Student/SA), E. Seaver (Vice Provost), C. Snow (LIB)

Guest: D. Smith, Catalog Editor/Curriculum Coordinator
Greg Long, Professor and Chair of General Education Committee

I. Adoption of Agenda

In the absence of E. Seaver and C. Snow, D. Gorman agreed to serve as acting chair for the meeting.

A motion was made by S. Ouellette, seconded by J. Corwin, to approve the agenda. The motion carried.

II. Announcements

A. Approval of Minutes

Minutes of the March 6, 2008, meeting of the Undergraduate Coordinating Council were approved electronically.

B. Student Information System Update

There was no report.

III. Reports/Minutes from Standing Committees

A. Admissions Policies and Academic Standards Committee

W. Goldenberg reported on the March 5, 2008, APASC meeting. He reported that revised Military Credit catalog language was approved, as well as a temporary academic accommodation
change in the academic withdrawal date due to February 14th and the backing up of final exam week. The committee discussed APASC’s role in reviewing limited admission/retention requests and tabled for further discussion the review of three department limited admission requests while awaiting a response from the Provost’s Office and findings of the strategic planning task force are received. The committee also approved placement of the Limited Retention Program item in the catalog, approved elimination of the transfer of D grades, approved elimination of the NR grade, and approved, for clarification purposes, revised catalog language for the Second Baccalaureate Degree. Other items tabled until the next meeting included Double Major/Double Degree and Changing the Undergraduate Catalog Expiration Date.

Referencing the minutes, D. Gorman suggested a revision to the following catalog wording which was approved by APASC in the item Transfer of D Grades:

“NIU accepts no D grades in transfer. All courses in which a grade of D is earned will not be included in the transfer credit evaluation.”

He explained that a change needs to be made to more clearly define that no grades of D will be included, because as it reads now, the interpretation is left open that some grades of D will be included.

After a brief discussion, it was suggested that a recommendation be made to APASC via the following friendly amendment to revise the catalog language for clarification purposes.

D. Gorman made a friendly motion, seconded by J. Corwin, to delete the word “All” from the proposed catalog wording so that the language reads as follows:

“NIU accepts no D grades in transfer. Courses in which a grade of D is earned will not be included in the transfer credit evaluation.”

The motion carried.

On behalf of a colleague, J. Wolfskill conveyed a concern the faculty member has about the approval of the temporary academic provision made for academic withdrawal. He said that the concern is basically a procedural matter and an advisement issue and explained that it is possible that some students may be disturbed by this policy, specifically when making the distinction between a course withdrawal and university withdrawal. He said that this could be a sensitive situation for a student on academic probation and that, in some situations, the more compassionate
alternative of this term may lead to some severe problems in the end. He said that the main concern expressed is that, in all cases, students do need advisement from the college offices.

D. Gorman commented that he was sure APASC had weighed this and given it considerable thought before making this decision.

W. Goldenberg made a motion, seconded by D. Ballantine, to receive the March 5, 2008, minutes of the Admissions Policies and Academic Standards Committee meeting. The motion carried.

B. General Education Committee

D. Gorman reported on the February 28, 2008, GEC meeting. He noted that most of the meeting was devoted to the discussion of general education goals and the idea presented by Greg Long, Chair of the General Education Committee, of changing the focus of what the GEC has been doing. He said that the primary charges of the committee currently are to review courses submitted or resubmitted on a regular basis for approval as general education courses within the university and make general recommendations for changes for the good of the general education program.

He further stated that the concern presented to the committee by Greg Long was that the committee needs to use the remainder of this academic year, and possibly next fall, to take the opportunity to rethink what general education is all about at NIU. He pointed out that the general education program has not been seriously looked at in over twenty years, and other universities are way ahead of where NIU is on general education. He said that the committee would like to greatly simplify and streamline the process of reviewing course submissions and resubmissions by using subcommittees rather than having all committee members reviewing all submissions. He noted also that this will parallel with the work of the Strategic Planning Task Force on Curricular Innovation, which has also been looking at numerous aspects of the general education program.

D. Gorman made a motion, seconded by J. Corwin, to receive the February 28, 2008, minutes of the General Education Committee meeting. The motion carried.

General Education Overview

D. Gorman introduced Greg Long, Chair of the General Education Committee. G. Long reiterated that it has been a long time since the university had taken a thorough look at general education. He said that there are a number of
individuals who have been involved in general education over the years, and there have been efforts to tweak it but not in terms of taking a thorough look at it and establishing student learning objectives that everyone is familiar with. He said that most faculty would have no idea what the general education learning goals are, and most students would have no idea what general education is other than a series of hurdles that they have to get through until they get to their major. He pointed out that the NIU website has no general education page or links to general education information. He said that, with the strategic plan in place and the Curricular Innovations Task Force being involved, a really good window of opportunity presents itself for the university to begin to talk about and discuss what the university wants general education to be. He pointed out that nationally, many universities stake a huge part of their reputation and their branding on what their general education program looks like.

He went on to say that a team of several individuals from NIU will be attending an AACU workshop in Minnesota at the end of May to participate in a five-day general education workshop. The purpose of participation in the workshop will be to develop a plan and some ideas toward formulating a process on how to engage faculty and have university-wide discussion on what would make a good general education program, what should be involved, what would be meaningful, and what would be the skills and abilities that students ought to have.

G. Long went on to say that a proposal from the General Education Committee and the Curricular Innovations Task Force will be forthcoming to be submitted to the President’s Office to simply redefine and potentially restructure general education. He explained that this is being looked at as a several-step process, with the first step being to take a snapshot of where we are now by possibly looking at course syllabi and who teaches general education courses. A good portion of next year could then be used to engage the university via a variety of different formats, by asking faculty, students, and others for input on what will make the program valuable and what outcomes they would like to see. Then, using that information, subsequently, start to redefine and redevelop a general education program that is more in line with the university’s distinctive mission and goals and that people know about.

He said that one example of an outcome derived from this process might be a general education website or a listserv or other means of support for faculty who teach general education courses. He said other eventual goals would be to develop a process that is streamlined both in terms of submissions and resubmissions, provides support for faculty, and possibly becomes incorporated into the new
student orientation program. He summarized that the concept would be to assess where the university is now, engage the university in discussion about where it might want to go, and start to develop a program that is more aligned.

D. Ballatine pointed out that a standard in his department is that general education objectives be included on the syllabi of all general education courses, and he pointed out that the general education objectives are included in the catalog. However, he agreed that the submission and resubmission process does need to be streamlined. He also pointed out that, automatically, by virtue of obtaining an Associate of Arts degree, in any community college, with the articulation agreement NIU has, the university has to accept those credits as meeting the general education requirements at NIU. With all the different community colleges in Illinois, this could be a very broad range, and it needs to be determined what the university is actually accepting. G. Long responded that this issue has been raised by a number of people as there are some programs that integrate general education goals into the major. This is a situation where a transfer student could be admitted and still have course work or other things that would relate to general education beyond just the freshman and sophomore years. He noted that this is an issue that needs a great deal of discussion as this would require a significant change in how general education is viewed at NIU.

J. Corwin asked for clarification on what the nature of the problem is with regard to general education and whether students have complained or feel like they don’t understand why they are taking these courses. G. Long responded that the major concerns are coming from faculty and departments, particularly related to the submission and resubmission process. He said that there is also a general sense in the university that no one knows particularly what the general education program is, so there needs to be dissemination in order for people to understand what’s happening, in addition to a process that can assess it better. He said currently assessment of the general education goals is sporadic. He feels that the structure of general education, in terms of how it is organized, ought to be significantly reviewed. He noted that it might also be beneficial to have an individual designated that can help to insure the integrity of the process and coordinate some of the assessment efforts. He added that, from the standpoint of assessment, it is necessary to assess what is being done and report it accordingly. He said that the current structure does not allow that to be done in a useful manner because things are not well-defined, and support is not provided for individuals to handle some of the assessment pieces that need to be reported.
D. Gorman added that Vice Provost Seaver has indicated that one of the outcomes of the Strategic Planning Curricular Innovations Task Force will be the rethinking of general education; the task force has decided that there is a need to look at general education.

J. Corwin again asked for clarification on what the nature of the problem is and who or what is prompting the request for restructuring. G. Long said that the appeal has come from administration, along with the fact that there is difficulty with the resubmission process. He also noted that, nationally, the university has reporting requirements, and the Spellings Commission would like everyone to implement a standardized test. J. Corwin asked if the university is meeting the necessary requirements. G. Long answered that, if there is not improvement made in the current way things are being done, the risk of having someone come in and prescribe how to do it becomes more probable. He emphasized that reviewing the current program and improving on it are key in order to show that the general education program makes a difference. He added that there is a compelling push to be more accountable. In order to be more accountable for what we do, then it is necessary to look at what we are doing and if what we are doing is meeting the needs of our students.

J. Corwin questioned who in particular has given the directive that this must be done. G. Long answered that this has been conveyed from Vice Provost Seaver, Provost Alden, and the strategic planning task force. J. Corwin suggested that we get more information as to the nature of the external assessing body that looks at this level of reporting and what the criteria are that are being used to do the assessment. B. Wilkins suggested asking for data and proof that there is a problem that exists before expending additional time, energy and money to rework the general education program. W. Goldenberg volunteered to talk with someone on the University Assessment Panel, possibly Virginia Cassidy, about what body requires reporting on general education assessment.

D. Ballatine commented, in order to clarify, that he was not sure that G. Long had necessarily said that this is something that definitely needs to be concerned about. As Long pointed out, this program has not been reviewed in 25 years. The first thing that should be done is to find out the current state of NIU’s general education program and how it compares to others across the nation to see if NIU is in line with the institutions to which it would like to aspire. He noted that all university programs are assessed externally, including by the state. He suggested that when the NIU team attends the AACU meeting in May, the team find out where other programs around the country are.
G. Long said that the hope is that opening and holding further discussions will lead to change which will be brought about in a manner that makes sense and is helpful to everyone. He noted that the General Education Committee is working on this as a process and will be actively soliciting involvement from faculty and UCC. He added that he hoped that UCC would support and endorse the concept that general education needs to be looked at again.

C. Honors Committee

There was no report.

D. Committee on the Improvement of Undergraduate Education

D. Gorman asked committee members to independently review the minutes of the February 4, 2008, meeting of the Committee on the Improvement of Undergraduate Education. There was no discussion.

D. Gorman made a motion, seconded by S. Ouellette, to receive the February 4, 2008, minutes of the Committee on the Improvement of Undergraduate Education meeting. The motion carried.

E. Committee on the Undergraduate Academic Environment

There was no report.

F. Committee on the Undergraduate Curriculum

There was no report.

IV. Other Reports

A. University Assessment Panel

There was no report.

B. Task Forces on Curricular Innovation and Student Success

There was no report.

V. Old Business

There was no old business.

VI. New Business
A. **UCC Representative to University Assessment Panel for 2008-2009**

Selection of a UCC committee representative to serve on the University Assessment Panel was tabled until the May 1, 2008 meeting.

**VII. Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 2:02 p.m. The next UCC meeting is scheduled for Thursday, May 1, 2008, beginning at 1:00 p.m. in Altgeld Hall 203.

Respectfully submitted,
Mollie Montgomery