I. Adoption of Agenda

Changnon suggested revising the order of the agenda to receive the report from the Committee on the Undergraduate Curriculum (CUC) prior to the other committee reports. He explained that guest Connie Fox was in attendance to answer questions regarding that report, and this would enable her to leave after that portion of the meeting.

A motion was made by Mantzke, seconded by Schlabach, to approve the revised agenda. The motion carried.

II. Announcements

A. Approval of Minutes

A motion was made by Morris, seconded by Lindvall, to approve the minutes of the April 7, 2011, Undergraduate Coordinating Council meeting. The motion carried.

III. Reports/Minutes from Standing Committees

A. Admissions Policies and Academic Standards Committee

Goldenberg reported that at the March 2, 2011, APASC meeting the committee accepted the 2009-2010 college reinstatement reports and approved the proposed attendance catalog language change/addition. The committee also discussed a recommendation from
Faculty Senate to adopt a plus/minus grading system. It was felt that more feedback was needed from students and advising deans, so, the plus/minus grading system proposal was referred to various student groups, advising deans, and curricular deans to obtain input on the five options outlined in the proposal. This grading proposal issue will be revisited at the April APASC meeting.

Changnon explained that the attendance language addition is intended to provide any student who participates in any university sponsored activity off-campus an opportunity to talk to their professor, in advance, about arrangements to make up the work that will be missed during that absence. The faculty member would then work with the student to make arrangements for the work missed that day to be made up. Najjar expressed concern that the attendance policy language was quite general in nature, which could make it difficult to apply to situations, such as labs, that are scheduled for an extended period of time. Changnon pointed out that in lab situations, if the faculty member felt that a student could not make up the work missed and it was that important for the student to be in attendance for the labs, then it should be part of the discussion the faculty member has with the student before the student takes that class. The student should have the ability to talk to the faculty member before taking the course about what impact there might be on the overall coursework due to missing a significant amount of class time.

Jones commented that the value of this language is that the attendance issue has to be discussed the first day of class and put into the syllabus so that students know up front what the expectations are. He added that this is an academic freedom issue, and it is up to the faculty member to decide what the attendance policy is for his/her class and be explicit about what the policy is on the first day of class.

Rich Holly said that Jones' comments reflected the exact intent of the language. He said it is important to have some generalization in the language so that faculty members still have the freedom to write the syllabus. Faculty members can then decide how far in advance students must communicate with them about such absences.

Najjar said that in her department there is pre-registration, and the classes are very limited. If a number of students were to withdraw from these courses, it may be difficult to replace those students, especially those who are truly interested in the class. Changnon pointed out that, in most situations, a student will probably only miss one or two classes in a given semester, with student athletes possibly missing somewhat more frequently.

Holly emphasized that the intent of this policy is not to solve every problem with student attendance. The intent is to convey that the student and the organizing unit taking the student off campus have some responsibility and that the faculty member has some responsibility to communicate with the student what is reasonable to meet the requirements of the class. By putting this in writing, the faculty member has a policy to fall back on, and students will understand what their rights and responsibilities are.

Changnon pointed out that the intent is similar in nature to that of the catalog language related to students who are going to be missing class for religious observances being provided the opportunity to have this same type of conversation with a faculty member. It is expected and important that the sponsoring unit will understand their responsibility and play a role in communicating with faculty and students regarding an absence related to a
university sponsored event. Mantzke commented that it would be important and helpful to receive communication and notification from the sponsoring unit about planned absences.

Goldenberg made a motion, seconded by Morris, to receive the March 2, 2011, minutes of the Admissions Policies and Academic Standards Committee meeting. The motion carried.

Goldenberg went to report on the April 13, 2011, APASC meeting, noting that the committee approved one curricular item from the College of Education and limited admissions proposals submitted from the College of Education and the College of Health and Human Sciences. The committee also discussed and took action on the Faculty Senate recommendation to adopt a plus/minus grading system, recommending that no change be made in the grading system.

Goldenberg made a motion, seconded by Mantzke, to receive the April 13, 2011, minutes of the Admissions Policies and Academic Standards Committee meeting.

Seaver noted that, although minutes are not yet available, the APASC Committee did meet on May 4, 2011, to reconsider the plus/minus grading system change, and Alan Rosenbaum, Faculty Senate President, addressed the committee at that meeting. However, the APASC committee took no further action on the grading system change proposal at that meeting, so, there was no change to the recommendation made in the April 13, 2011, minutes.

Henry said it would be helpful to have an understanding of the APASC discussion relating to the plus/minus grading system and what APASC’s role is and how it fits with this issue. Seaver suggested that Alan Rosenbaum provide some background on the grading system change proposal.

Rosenbaum explained that the idea of going to a plus/minus grading system was brought up by a faculty member in a Faculty Senate meeting. He said that, although this issue has been brought up before, he wasn’t sure that there was a sense of what the full faculty’s feelings were about the plus/minus grading system. This time when the issue came up, it was given to the Academic Affairs Committee, and the Academic Affairs Committee produced a carefully referenced report on plus/minus grading. Rosenbaum went on to say that the highlights of that report were that the majority of schools in the Big Ten have plus/minus grading systems. Within Illinois, publics only, University of Illinois-Urbana Champaign, and Western Illinois University have plus/minus grading systems. In general, there are many schools that have plus/minus systems rather than the straight letter grading as NIU has. The committee also made an effort to find out if there were any data that suggests that plus/minus grading systems have a positive or negative impact on overall grade point average of a student, and that data seems to be inconclusive. One of the issues has to do with whether or not the A+ is used. There are many plus/minus systems that do not include the A+. Not having the A+ tends to deflate the GPA’s; the addition of the A+ would probably counteract that as a minus can be countered with a plus.

Rosenbaum also said that the committee made an effort to find out from the administration, specifically from the Vice Provost’s office, whether or not this would be expensive to integrate as Faculty Senate was not looking to make a change in this current
financial climate that was extremely costly. He said that it was felt by both President Peters and Provost Alden that the faculty should vote on whether they were in favor of such a change, irrespective of the cost. The Faculty Senators were asked to go back to their home departments, take votes, and represent that vote in a general vote of the Faculty Senate. The results of the Faculty Senate vote were that 36 departments voted in favor of going to a plus/minus grading system, three departments were opposed, and four abstained. Faculty Senate felt there was an overwhelming support for the plus/minus grading system. The grading system that was voted on did include the A+ but did not include the D-. The results of this vote were then sent to the Admissions Policies and Academic Standards Committee (APASC). However, APASC voted to not endorse the plus/minus grading system.

Rosenbaum also shared with UCC members a letter sent to APASC from the Academic Affairs committee that spearheaded this action within the Senate and conducted the report asking APASC for a reconsideration vote. He noted that he had attended the May 4th meeting of APASC, and APASC did not change their original decision to not endorse the plus/minus grading system.

Rosenbaum expressed that his concern, after attending the May 4th APASC meeting, was that, although APASC appreciated the fact that Faculty Senate had done a survey of the faculty, APASC had also done their own survey of College Curriculum Committees, students, and Advising Deans. APASC represented to Faculty Senate that results of their survey supported not changing the grading system. He said that, after taking a closer look at the survey vote, there appeared to be cause to question the survey vote. He explained that, putting aside the student vote, because Faculty Senate does not feel that this is a student prerogative, and faculty control grading, and putting aside the Advising Deans vote, because they are advising deans and not teaching faculty, there leaves only the survey of the College Curriculum Committees. Two of the colleges, Education and Visual and Performing Arts, made no response, so, those colleges did not weigh in on the matter. The College of Business voted yes, and the College of Health and Human Sciences voted no. The College of Liberal Arts and Sciences voted for “Option Three” which is pluses only, no minuses, and only if it was mandatory, adding an additional note stating no change if not mandatory. Rosenbaum pointed out that this could not be made mandatory because academic freedom issues prohibit mandating that faculty have to use a plus/minus grading system. He concluded that the vote then would be two no votes, one yes vote, and two no responses, which is the vote that APASC decided should outweigh the sentiment of the faculty as represented in the Faculty Senate for a plus/minus grading system.

Rosenbaum went on to say that, on behalf of the faculty, if it is within UCC’s power, he is asking UCC to override the decision of APASC and approve the plus/minus grading system. If that is not an option, then he asks that UCC send this item back to APASC for further reconsideration.

Mantzke asked, aside from the financial aid issues and the C- issue, if there was anything in the document that recommended that departments talk with faculty about whether or not the department should collectively agree on what grading should be used. She pointed out that, if three faculty are teaching three different sections of the same course, and only one of those three uses plus/minus grading, unique registration trends may arise. Rosenbaum said that there was not such a recommendation in the Faculty Senate document but that these things were discussed by Faculty Senate. He went on to say that, with regard to those
type of differences between sections, there is already that issue; some faculty members are easier grader than others. He feels most faculty would take advantage of the ability to make finer grade distinction between students.

With regard to the C-, Rosenbaum said that he contacted individuals in Education at the University of Illinois/Champaign-Urbana, as this is an important issue for teacher certification. This was not an issue for that university because students are allowed to repeat two courses regardless of grade and because a new grade replacement policy has been instituted which enables students to replace up to ten credits of courses that they wish to repeat. This would enable a student who had received a C- in a required course to retake the course, if possible.

Other options would be to consider a C- to be a C or to make some other definition. He said Faculty Senate did not see the C- issue as a stumbling block but did view it as something that has to be considered and how it would affect every department, especially those departments that require a C as entry into a certain major. He said these types of issues would have to addressed.

Baker asked why this couldn’t be left to each individual department’s discretion rather than made a university policy. Seaver answered that a different grading system is being created to replace the A, B, C, D, and departments can make whatever decision they are allowed to make under academic freedom and other governance rules. Baker then asked if it was stated in any university policy that departments, at their discretion, can opt out and be allowed to make their own decisions regarding the grading policy rather than using the university-wide grading system. Seaver answered, no, it is not stated in either the current or proposed policy, and all this would be doing is replacing the grading system.

Lindvall shared some insight from the student perspective stating that earlier this year, she had been involved with bringing the Faculty Senate issue of plus/minus grading to students in order to gauge their perspectives and concerns about this issue. She did this research as part of her platform for running for Student Trustee. She reported that she reached out to a total of 262 members of the student body from all different colleges and organizations. She said that 255 students had negative reactions to the plus/minus grading. The concern repeated most often by the students, because this would not be mandatory, was the issue of fairness. Students were concerned with majors that have limited admissions and retention and how they would be affected. There was also the matter for existing students who already have GPA’s and when the policy would take place and how this would affect them. She said that, overwhelmingly, although this was not a scientific study and a small sampling, students were pretty upset about the proposed grading policy change.

Goldenberg questioned whether all faculty in all departments actually voted or provided their opinion on the proposed grading policy. He noted that, in his department, faculty were asked for their opinion, and he did respond. However, he said he feels it is likely that most of the faculty didn’t respond, especially if they were in favor of keeping the same policy that is in effect now. He said that, if someone felt strongly about making a change, they might respond, but that is not the same as a faculty vote.

Henry, a Faculty Senate representative from HHS, responded that it was actually part of Faculty Senate’s discussion to engage faculty and to make it a vote. The thought was to handle this in a more serious way rather than to simply ask if everyone was all right with
this, and, if no objections were heard, the issue would move forward. Jones said that his department did hold a vote. Seaver pointed out that at the May 4th APASC meeting, it was noted that one department, and possibly a second, did not handle this with a vote. He also emphasized that the voting membership of APASC is comprised of faculty and students, not administrators, and those faculty members expressed the same kind of anecdotal relationship, comments, and experiences that are being mentioned at this meeting. He added that some departments likely handled this very seriously while others may have handled it in a more casual manner.

Rosenbaum added that it is impossible to control how every Faculty Senate representative presented this issue at his/her department, however, the objective was to get as close as possible to a vote of the faculty. He said that some departments were able to provide a vote prior to the large vote, and, although the count may have been close, the vote was two-thirds to one-third in favor of adopting the plus/minus grading. He said in those departments that there were numbers on, the vote was not close; it was two-thirds in favor and one-third opposed. He agreed that there might have been faculty members that did not handle the presentation of the issue in the preferred manner, but in a democratic system it is necessary to get as close to the vote of the body as possible. He said he believes that this was a closer vote than the vote that APASC used consulting with the curriculum committees of the colleges and going with two out of the five colleges supporting the change and taking that as a vote against plus/minus grading. He added that, given a choice between what the Faculty Senate did and what APASC did, he would have to support what Faculty Senate did as coming closer to the faculty sentiment.

Seaver commented that the essence of the discussion at APASC wasn’t so much the vote, as the committee did seek information from all different constituencies. Rather, the discussion was more related to the fact that changing the grading system results in many other decisions that have to be made. Issues that would arise include how to deal with a C- as it relates to repeats, how to deal with the C or better, how would GPA’s be dealt with, and what impact this would have on limited admissions programs. He said these are among the questions that were raised at APASC, and, although the Faculty Senate voted in favor of the change, there are lots of other decisions that arise out of this that had not been thought about in great detail nor communicated back and forth one way or another. Seaver summarized that the concerns of APASC were not so much the rejection of the plus/minus grading but rather that there are lots of issues that need to be addressed and discussed with APASC and others that want to move in this direction if the institution still wants to move forward.

Goldenberg commented that one of the points made at a previous meeting of APASC was that, if this system were to be passed, a lot of the other changes need to be thought out and gone through concurrently or simultaneously so that problems don’t arise. Seaver agreed stating that the example brought up at APASC was that, if the repeat policy is going to be changed, then the repeat policy has to be in place at the time that the grading system would be implemented. Rosenbaum responded that Faculty Senate understands and is in agreement with that. He said that the change is not planned to take place until at least the fall of 2012, at best, so, that leaves at least one year to work on getting all of these pieces in place. Seaver noted that, in order for this take effect in the fall 2012, all of the issues would have to be resolved by January or February 2012.
Rosenbaum commented that it is important to note that Faculty Senate was well aware that the implications of C- for all these programs and other issues would need to be addressed. He added that he had the impression that these details could be taken care of relatively easily. Seaver emphasized that everything that has been brought up, including the complete repeat process, will have to go through the faculty governance process for decisions to be made by faculty and students.

Mantzke asked what alternatives UCC has with regard to acting on this proposal. She commented that she would like to make a proposal to abide by the Faculty Senate’s vote that the faculty were in support of the plus/minus grading policy and send it back to whatever committee needs to deal with all of potential issues. Seaver clarified that UCC has always operated on accepting standing committee minutes, not taking any definitive action. He said that, if UCC doesn’t agree with what has come forward, they can either send the entire set of minutes back to APASC for reconsideration or choose to return only specific items of the minutes. Seaver suggested that, if UCC decides to send these minutes back to APASC, a recommendation be made that APASC work with the Academic Affairs Subcommittee of Faculty Senate to resolve the issue. This would include identifying all of the issues and working on the best way possible to resolve the differences with the plus/minus grading system.

After a brief further discussion, Mantzke amended the motion currently on the table.

Mantzke amended the original motion made by Goldenberg and approved by Goldenberg, seconded by Morris, to receive the April 13, 2011, minutes of the Admissions Policies and Academic Standards Committee meeting (New Business Items III A. and III B only) WITH THE EXCEPTION OF ITEM IV. OLD BUSINESS, ITEM A. “FACULTY SENATE RECOMMENDATION TO ADOPT A PLUS/MINUS GRADING SYSTEM” AND TO RETURN THIS ITEM TO APASC FOR RECONSIDERATION, WITH THE RECOMMENDATION THAT APASC WORK WITH THE ACADEMIC AFFAIRS SUBCOMMITTEE OF FACULTY SENATE TO IDENTIFY ALL OF THE DIFFERENCES AND ISSUES RELATED TO THE PLUS/MINUS GRADING SYSTEM PROPOSAL AND WORK TO RESOLVE THESE DIFFERENCES IN THE BEST WAY POSSIBLE. The amended motion carried: 14 yes - 2 no - 1 abstention.

B. Committee on the Improvement of Undergraduate Education

Changnon provided a summary of the CIUE meeting of March 21, 2011, noting that the committee finalized selection of the 2011 Excellence in Undergraduate Teaching and Instruction Award recipients and discussed the process used for evaluating the CIUE summer grants.

Schlabach made a motion, seconded by Mantzke, to receive the March 21, 2011, minutes of the Committee on the Improvement of Undergraduate Education meeting. The motion carried.

Changnon also reported on the CIUE meeting of April 11, 2011. As there was no quorum at this meeting, a meeting summary rather than formal minutes was submitted. The committee discussed final revisions to the CIUE grant proposal forms and the Excellence in
Undergraduate Teaching and Instruction Award submission forms, with final revisions to be approved at the next CIUE meeting.

C. T. Lin expressed concern over the lack of attendance and lack of quorum at this and other recent standing committee meetings. He wondered what could be done to improve attendance and impress upon committee members the importance of their participation on these committees.

Morris made a motion, seconded by Lindvall, to receive the April 11, 2011, meeting summary of the Committee on the Improvement of Undergraduate Education meeting. The motion carried.

C. Committee on the Undergraduate Academic Environment

Schlabach reported on the February 8, 2011, meeting of CUAE noting that the committee heard presentations from Bev Espe, Assistant Director, Health Services, and Murali Krishnamurthi, Director, Faculty Development and Instructional Design Center. Both guests provided informative overviews of their respective areas and their roles within the university community.

Schlabach made a motion, seconded by Lilly, to receive the February 8, 2011, minutes of the Committee on the Undergraduate Academic Environment meeting. The motion carried.

As Schlabach was not in attendance at the March 8, 2011, CUAE meeting, Changnon reported that the committee was provided a tour of the Neptune residence halls, coordinated by Mike Stang, Executive Director, Housing and Dining. The committee also heard a report from Jeff Daurer, Director, Capital Budget and Space Planning, on recent and upcoming improvements and construction planned for campus facilities.

Schlabach made a motion, seconded by Mantzke, to receive the March 8, 2011, minutes of the Committee on the Undergraduate Academic Environment meeting. The motion carried.

D. Committee on the Undergraduate Curriculum

Honig reported on the April 14, 2011, meeting of the CUC, noting that the committee discussed and approved the College of Education department name change and the related catalog changes and approved the B.A./B.S. in Women’s Studies.

Honig made a motion, seconded by Schlabach, to receive the April 14, 2011, minutes of the Committee on the Undergraduate Curriculum meeting. The motion carried.

E. General Education Committee

Changnon provided an overview of the March 24, 2011, meeting of the General Education Committee. The committee discussed submissions for numerous general education courses and discussed the level of assessment information that was provided with some of the resubmissions and how that could be communicated to departments in the future. The
The committee also discussed two articles, “What is a generally educated person” and “Universal Design.” Changnon explained that these two articles were brought to GEC because it is important right now as the newly approved baccalaureate goals and student learning outcomes are beginning to be integrated into the general education program.

**Morris made a motion, seconded by Azad, to receive the March 24, 2011, minutes of the General Education Committee meeting. The motion carried.**

Changnon also reported on the April 21, 2011, GEC meeting. One of two primary discussion topics of this meeting was the logic model map developed by Greg Long to be used for identifying ways to bring the newly approved baccalaureate goals into the general education program. A second discussion item was a letter provided to the GEC from the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences Senate and the response that will be made to that letter.

**Schlabach made a motion, seconded by Lindvall, to receive the April 21, 2011, minutes of the General Education Committee meeting. The motion carried.**

F. **Honors Committee**

Changnon provided a summary of the March 4, 2011, Honors Committee meeting. The committee heard reports from the director, assistant director, and program coordinator, and discussed a proposal to develop a bridge program between CHANCE and Honors. The committee also heard details regarding a proposal from Faculty Senate to change the grading system. In addition, announcements were made by Daniel Kempton, Director of Honors, and Kate Braser, Program Coordinator, that they have accepted new positions and will be leaving the Honors Program. Searches for both positions will begin soon.

**Schlabach made a motion, seconded by Lilly, to receive the March 4, 2011, minutes of the University Honors Committee meeting. The motion carried.**

IV. **Other Reports**

A. **University Assessment Panel**

Morris provided informational reports of the March 4, and April 1, 2011, meetings of the University Assessment Panel. The committee reviewed status reports from several non-academic units, approved two assessment funding requests, received the First-Year Composition Report for 2010, and was provided an overview of the role and work of the General Education Committee by Greg Long. The panel also heard an update on activities of the new student assessment group, Student Advisory Council on Learning Outcomes (SACLO).

V. **Old Business**

There was no old business.

VI. **New Business**

A. **UCC Representative to the University Assessment Panel for 2011-2013**
Jeanne Isabel volunteered to serve as the UCC representative to the University Assessment Panel for 2011-2013.

B. **Selection of Faculty Chair 2011-2012**

Postponed until first meeting of fall 2011 semester.

C. **Expressions of Appreciation**

Changnon expressed his thanks and appreciation to UCC and Vice Provost Gip Seaver for helping him throughout this past academic year to learn the process of UCC. He also acknowledged Seaver for his work and efforts with the activities of this committee over the past eight years. He presented Seaver with a certificate of appreciation, stating that UCC is grateful for his student-centered approach and the many contributions he has made to the quality of education for the undergraduate population at NIU and that the committee will miss his participation and wisdom.

Lindvall also thanked Seaver and the members of the committee for being so receptive and welcoming to student input. She added that her participation in the governance system over this past year has enriched her baccalaureate experience, and she looks forward to continuing her committee work next year.

VII. **Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 2:35 p.m.

The next UCC meeting is scheduled for Thursday, September 1, 2011, beginning at 1:00 p.m. in Altgeld Hall 203.

_Respectfully submitted,
Mollie Montgomery_