

MEETING MINUTES
COMMITTEE FOR THE IMPROVEMENT OF THE UNDERGRADUATE ACADEMIC
EXPERIENCE

Monday, October 4, 2021, 1:00-3:00 p.m.

Present in person: D. Dugas, D. Meighan, L. Sunderlin, K. Wiemer

Present via zoom: S. Bell, E. Fredericks, D. Gliesman, J. Gray, W. Johnson, N. Knutson, V. Korampally, T. Libert, K. Padron, A. Radasanu, N. Richards

Guest: Lisa Miner, Associate Vice President of Institutional Communications/ Chief Communications Strategist

Adoption of Agenda. Motion to adopt the agenda made by Korampally, seconded by Gray. The meeting started at 1:05 p.m.

Announcement & amendment. Wiemer announced that there is currently no administrative assistant assigned to record meeting notes and create minutes. As such, there are no minutes to approve for the September meeting. Wiemer and Knutson agreed to take minutes for the current meeting. Item IV of the agenda (New Members) was moved to be discussed before the guest arrived.

New Members. Sunderlin reported that no new student representatives had yet been added to the committee and reminded the representatives of the different colleges to try and recruit students for the coming meeting. The committee is supposed to have one student representing each college, and two for CLAS.

Presentation. One of the topics of concern generated at the September meeting was student awareness of how to access resources such as tutoring, advising, or other. Lisa Miner, Associate Vice President of Institutional Communications and Chief Communications Strategist for NIU, presented a 10 minute overview of the tools utilized by NIU to communicate topics of importance to students. (A summary of this information, provided by Miner after the meeting, is appended.) Among others, Miner described the NIU app that is developed in partnership with Jennice O'Brien. Miner mentioned that social media had become a particularly important tool to reach students during the pandemic. Current work efforts are focusing on the NIU website, including improved search functionality.

Q&A with Miner. The committee discussed how to best reach students. Sunderlin mentioned that often students do not even know where to look for information. Miner mentioned that it would be helpful for her office to receive frequently asked questions from departments' directors of undergraduate studies to address such issues. Also, she pointed out that many students most effectively receive information from their peers – as such, encouraging students to set up and use their own communication channels is a good way to get information to more students (especially in context of the fact that students get overwhelmed with too much email

communications and often fail to respond). Dugas asked if NIU uses groupchats to set up communications among students. Miner explained that the students typically are very good at setting these up on their own, and that NIU does not get involved in such student channels, as NIU may not always be able to endorse content of these channels and would need to monitor the content.

Miner also laid out a timeline of common student questions at different times of the semester, including locating classes and finding student groups early on in the term; tutoring and class withdrawals as well as mental health issues in the middle, and later in the term, class registration etc. Korampally mentioned that the NIU website can be quite overwhelming. He suggested that it may be helpful to incorporate a chatbot for commonly asked questions. Miner explained that the site does use a chatbot ("Victor") but that it only appears on select pages. (She mentioned that Jennice O'Brien has more information on this.) Finally, Miner stated that the main objective is to use communication channels that are already in place and work on making them more effective. Knutson added the importance of being selective in what info is shared with students and over what channels to avoid desensitizing students. For example, if students received several texts from NIU daily, they may stop reading them. Knutson shared the quote, "*when you highlight everything, you highlight nothing.*"

Review - Focus Themes for the 2021-2022 Academic Year. Wiemer thanked respondents for their rankings of the list of issues collected during the September meeting. She reminded the group to please provide rankings. Two members mentioned that they had not received the survey link, and Wiemer agreed to make sure they would get the link.

Update on EUIA/EUTA/David Raymond Technology in Teaching Application Process

Sunderlin provided an update on the application process. The current timeline is to open the call for nominations on October 15, with nominations due in departments by Dec 15 and at the college level by Jan 1. The CIUAE receives nominations for ranking in January and submits rankings to the chairs in February. The tallied rankings are then discussed and awardees decided upon in March. The award ceremony happens in April.

Some departments have requested more time to complete the nominations in the past. A discussion of the application timeline was held to ascertain whether the committee could complete the ranking process in time for the awards ceremony if the submission deadline was extended. It was decided to take a vote on the issue by qualtrics by the next meeting.

Sunderlin raised two wording changes from last year. First, he informed new members that last year, the committee voted to change the David Raymond Technology in Teaching award from "Grant" to "Award". Second, wording of some of the criteria were discussed. Last year, the committee discussed making the criterion of a nominee's scholarly record more relevant to a teaching award by relating the scholarship to teaching pedagogy. In discussing this criterion, the word pedagogy was determined to be too abstract to comprehend for students putting together the nomination for faculty. Options discussed were teaching "strategies" and teaching effectiveness. After a brief discussion, Dugas made a motion to adopt the wording "teaching effectiveness". The motion was seconded by Korampally. The motion passed by committee vote.

Announcements

Sunderlin mentioned that he may try to invite a presenter from CITL to attend the next meeting.

Adjournment

Fredericks motioned to adjourn; Gray seconded. The meeting was adjourned around 2:30.

Respectfully submitted by: Katja Wiemer and Lee Sunderlein