

## **MEETING MINUTES**

### **COMMITTEE FOR THE IMPROVEMENT OF THE UNDERGRADUATE ACADEMIC EXPERIENCE**

Monday, December 6, 2021 1:00-3:00 p.m.  
Hybrid Meeting Teams / AL 203

Attendees: *In person* – Nichole Knutson, Duane Meighan, Lee Sunderlin, Katja Wiemer; *online* – Ellen Davis, Daryl Dugas, Elisa Fredericks, Doriann Glieman, Jennifer Gray, Venu Korampally, Wendell Johnson, Tom Libert, Karla Padron, Andrea Radasanu, UnD’Re Wilson

Adoption of Agenda. The meeting started at 1:10 p.m. after resolving technical difficulties with Microsoft Teams. Meighan made a motion to approve the agenda; Fredericks seconded. Adoption passes unanimously.

A new student representative member (College of Engineering), UnD’Re Wilson, introduced himself to the committee and was given a quick overview of the committee functions.

Approval of Minutes. Two sets of minutes were approved. Fredericks made the motion to accept the minutes for the Nov. 1, 2021 meeting; Meighan seconded. The November minutes were approved unanimously. Fredericks moved to approve the minutes for the Sept. 13, 2021 meeting. Meighan seconded. The September minutes were approved unanimously.

Guests. Taylor Hayden, Associate Director for Digital Content at NIU and Allison Maurer, Social Media Content Strategist at NIU, talked to the committee about digital and social media communication channels with and among students. Hayden provided an overview of the virtual communities on Facebook created for each class as well as transfer and prospective transfer students. Groups are started in January for students newly enrolled to start the following Fall. All classes are listed in the social media directory [<https://www.niu.edu/emmc/institutional-communications/social-media/directory.shtml>] and students can choose which group they want to be in. Additionally, NIU maintains a Huskies of NIU Instagram account which is run by the students themselves (a different student every week) following some guidelines: <https://www.instagram.com/huskiesofniu/>. In addition, Twitter is being used increasingly as well as direct messaging to students on a lot of topics.

#### Questions from committee

Sunderlin asked about the audience size for the social media platforms. Hayden reported about 5000 users across the current groups, with Facebook being the busiest meeting place for the students. On these sites, students message about social meetups, events, selling & buying textbooks, seeking roommates and more. In addition, she said that students also use (independent of NIU) snapchat, instagram and tiktok to connect to each other. Maurer added that use of the different platforms is somewhat activity-specific, with Instagram being used the most to post events with links. She also mentioned that this account is maintained in

cooperation with Student Affairs in an effort to give the students more ownership of this communication channel, especially as a communication medium for the student government. She emphasized the office's awareness of the value of peer correspondence above communications from NIU. Maurer also stressed that any interested students can contact her (Email: amaurer@niu.edu) to take over the account for a week.

Sunderlin asked whether and how information can be shared to students from departments. Hayden referred to the internal communications office, specifically Rachel Xidis, who manages posters and the NIU app, and Andy Pemberton, who manages weekly notifications to students and *NIU Today*.

Libert brought up the issue of keeping content on social media safe and appropriate. Maurer shared that the overall guard rails for social media are to be productive and serve the NIU mission of education and building community are being observed. There is an ongoing review of post requests that she reports has been quite successful. Occasionally, controversial posts are made that need to be permitted (freedom of expression). Maurer reported that these posts are discussed internally with Lisa Miner and it is decided on a case by case basis whether and how to react. Knutson added that students seem to think of social media as the first choice to air grievances and that her office is working on guiding students towards the appropriate channels, such as the ombudsman's office.

Hayden said that the communications team is taking opportunities to encourage students' agency to look for information and find answers to questions. This is accomplished for example by frequently posting referrals to resource pages, information about how to manage problems, and reminding students of the importance to regularly check their NIU email.

Fredericks asked if there is one central place where students can find all information. The NIU App was suggested as the place.

Meighan mentioned the usefulness of handouts in addition to social media / email communications.

Wiemer asked if there is a link on the NIU app to the social media sites so students who are not aware of them can find them. Hayden said that students are regularly reminded of existing social media groups and can also find the groups on the Social Media Directory. Wiemer suggested possibly posting a link to this Directory in classes (e.g. on Blackboard), which Hayden said would be a fantastic way to reach more students.

Award nominations update. Sunderlin shared that regarding the Raymond Award (formerly Grant) language update, the agreed upon update is going through an approval process prior to making updates on the websites. Knutson shared that it is expected that the change will be approved. In addition, Sunderlin suggested adding photos and some information about current and past awardees of the Raymond award to make it more consistent with the Excellence in Undergraduate Teaching Awards. There was broad support for this. A motion was made by Gray

to approve the change of the award language on the website, seconded by Fredericks. The motion passed unanimously.

Addition of a CITL representative to committee. CITL (Center for Innovative Teaching and Learning) suggested adding a representative to attend CIUAE meetings regularly given that their mission closely aligns with that of CIUAE. A motion was made by Gray to add a CITL representative, seconded by Libert. A brief discussion ensued about who would be the representative and whether it would be the same person every month. There was consensus to leave that decision to CITL. The motion passed by unanimous vote.

Adjournment. Korampalli moved to adjourn the meeting; seconded by Wilson. The meeting was adjourned by unanimous vote at 2:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by: Katja Wiemer and Lee Sunderlein