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FACULTY SENATE MINUTES
Wednesday, January 19, 2011, 3 p.m.
Holmes Student Center Sky Room

PRESENT: Allori, Arado, Armstrong, Bennardo, Bisplinghoff, Bonnicksen, Bowers, Brandt, Cappell, Castle, Collins, Cripe, Feurer, Flynn, Goldblum, Griffin, Haliczzer, Hansen, B. Henry, P. Henry, Houze, Hu, Kostic, Kowalski, Lash, Latham, Lin, Marchewka, Martin, May, Mirman, Monteiro, Moraga, Naples, Newman, Nicolosi, Novak, Pitney, Rintala, Rosenbaum, Sagarin, Slotsve, Smith, Staikidis, Tonks, Valentiner, Wade, Willis, Von Ende, Zahay Blatz,

Parliamentarian Ferald Bryan was present.

ABSENT: Azad, Bishop, Blecksmith, Brubaker, Butler, Calmeyer, Cozad, Cummings, Elish-Piper, Finley, Fisher, Freedman, Greene, Gupta, Jaffee, Jeffrey, Lee, Lenczewski, Liu, Lusk, Mogren, Mohabbat, Poole, Prawitz, Shortridge, Snow, Stravers, Thu, Waas, Yamagata-Lynch

I. CALL TO ORDER

Meeting called to order at 3:05 p.m.

A. Rosenbaum: Welcomed Senators back from the winter break.

II. ADOPTION OF AGENDA

A. Rosenbaum: called for a motion to adopt the agenda with one walk-in item.

D. Wade made the motion, **P. Henry** was second.

The agenda was unanimously adopted with one walk-in item.

**III. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF THE NOVEMBER 17, 2010 FS MEETING
(sent electronically)**

J. Bowers: Moved to approve the minutes, **J. Novak** was second.

The minutes of the November 17th meeting were approved without correction or dissent.

IV. PRESIDENT'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

A. Rosenbaum: reminded Senators to use the microphones and state their names whenever they speak and also that we are covered by the Northern Star. First, I want to note with sadness, the passing of long-time Faculty Senate member Mike Morris. Mike passed away on December 12th after a long illness. He was a professor in the Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures and by all accounts, he was both an inspirational teacher and a beloved colleague in his department. He also served for many years on the Faculty Senate and last year served both as

Co-Chair of the joint committee on Resources, Space and Budget and also as Vice President of the Senate. The whole NIU community will miss him, and we will certainly miss his voice in the Senate.

P. Henry: I just wanted to say thank you, and he is very much missed in the Foreign Language Department. I will convey the Senate's opinion, and he was really just a delightful colleague, so thank you.

V. ITEMS FOR FACULTY SENATE CONSIDERATION

A. Student Grievance Procedure

A. Rosenbaum: raised the issue of a Student Grievance Policy. The nature of this is that we do not have a specific policy that allows students to grieve against faculty members. This first came down from the University Counsel to the Senate in October of 2003. According to the Chair of the committee that dealt with this, the Faculty Senate considered this throughout most of that year and delayed action until October of 2004. The Faculty Senate took the rest of the fall semester of 2004 to form a committee, which first met in February of 2005. The committee was an ad hoc committee that was put together by the Faculty Senate. It contained both Faculty Senate members as well as other individuals, such as the Ombudsman. There were also student members on the committee. According to Buck Stephen, who chaired it, there were 16 people on it, and getting 16 people together at any one time was very difficult. The committee only met a few times and never produced a document for Faculty Senate consideration. According to Buck, the problems had to do both with trying to get a committee of that size together and also with trying to define acceptable and unacceptable behavior. We do not have to revive the committee. The question is whether the Senate wants to. I asked people to think about it, and so I will open the floor for a discussion.

S. Willis: Questioned why this should be an item for the Faculty Senate and wondered whether we might not want to send it back to the UC, since it seems to me to be a wider issue than just faculty. It would seem to me that the University Council would be a more natural place for it.

A. Rosenbaum: It might have been felt, and I agree with this, that the faculty might have some strong feelings about it that should be addressed first before a larger body considers it.

P. Henry: asked how decisions would be made regarding such grievances and how it would be determined whether a grievance was justified.

A. Rosenbaum: My assumption would be that if we come up with a policy, we also have to come up with a process. A panel could be involved and just as with any other grievance, it would make a decision based on the evidence that was presented and their best judgment as to whether or not the grievance had merit. This would be up to whatever committee we created or assigned to develop a policy.

S. Willis: I would say if we decide to take this up again, what I would suggest is not making an ad hoc committee that includes students. What I would suggest we do, if we do anything, is to

come up with a draft policy from the faculty point of view and then send it back to the University Council for Council action because I think that's where the student input should come in.

D. Valentiner: I don't really understand what types of grievances would be involved. We have grade appeals mechanisms, and I think there are ways that students can ask for accountability for people's behavior. Could you maybe flesh this out a little bit and talk about what types of grievances are not being addressed and what types of mechanisms are not in place or could be in place or where the cracks in the system are?

A. Rosenbaum: We posted a document on Blackboard which gave a bunch of examples of the kinds of things that fall into this category of a grievance that is not addressed by something already in place. Despite whatever procedures we have, apparently the Ombudsman's office still gets quite a few complaints that would seem to be not addressed by any existing process. So, I could ask Tim if he wants to try and really, just in the most global sense, give us some idea of kind and the number of these problems.

T. Griffin: The examples that were posted largely came from situations that were presented in the Office of the Ombudsman. Let me start by saying there is already a grievance procedure that students can engage for staff. If students feel as though a civil service operating staff member or a supportive professional staff employee have in some way acted toward them in a untoward manner, an inappropriate manner, in addition to simply going to a direct supervisor, there is also, existing through the Human Resource Services Department, a grievance process that can be engaged. There is no such process in place for grievances against faculty. The kinds of examples that would be brought typically are allegations of behavior that are strongly deviant from the code of conduct approved by this body for faculty on the campus. They do not represent necessarily illegal actionable items. Items that would be addressed through the Affirmative Action Office or the Grade Appeal Procedure, but rather violations of the code of behavior that this body approved. Many chairs on the campus do not feel it is their responsibility to enforce that code of behavior in any significant or tangible personnel action kind of way. Students often feel that the chairs are not responsive and there is no further action that they can take. The number of times that that occurs in my office, and I don't for a second want you to think that I have conducted a survey is probably 6 or 10 times a year for the whole campus. To give you a comparison, I get 40 to 50 grade appeal concerns in my office every year.

D. Valentiner: It seems desirable to me that we should have some method by which faculty can be held accountable to students for behavior that deviates greatly from what we deem to be appropriate conduct.

J. Kowalski: Well, I was just going to ask you, Tim, if you felt that the small number of events nevertheless represented what you would consider to be at least several serious infractions that might need attention?

T. Griffin: Yes, the ones about which I'm speaking are, if you are alluding to the fact that sometimes people's perceptions of their mistreatment are not always consistent with those that a reasonable person might have in the same situation, believe me, in my job, you become very well aware of that and very sensitive to that early on. I'm talking about things that I believe, if true,

as being alleged to me, would be very likely seen as outside the parameters of those guidelines that this body approved.

A. Rosenbaum: Asked if anyone wanted to make a motion and seeing none moved on to the next item. The next item has to do with the response from the Library Advisory Committee to the Senate's resolution regarding the disposition of Library materials. The response of the LAC was again, posted on Blackboard, so you've had a chance to read it. The question for us is whether or not that is a satisfactory response to our resolution. So, I will open the floor for comments.

P. Henry: I was a little surprised that there weren't more people who would come forward to make an issue of the fact that the J-STOR was replacing the hard copies but there was only one. Apparently only the Math Department that made the case.

A. Rosenbaum: I think it was only the Math Department that went forward with it enough to actually get the materials back. I think there were other departments that had some concerns. I don't know whether or not they actually went so far as to go to a hearing with the Library Advisory Committee, but so far, only one department has gotten it back and according to the response of the LAC, they are allowing another couple of months for departments who want to try to get their materials back to file a request with the LAC. Personally, one question I had about this was in the response, it says the NIU libraries will communicate major changes to library resources. I don't know what the definition of "major changes" is and I think that might be of some import to us.

P. Henry: And this will, in fact, get passed on to the department chairs so that we know about it, or is that the responsibility of the Faculty Senate members, to communicate this to the department?

A. Rosenbaum: I don't know if it's the responsibility. Remember, this is a draft. It was advisory to the Provost. The Provost has yet to accept it. If we think it's okay the way it is, then more than likely the Provost will accept it and it will become the policy and that will be transmitted probably to the deans I would guess. But certainly as a Faculty Senate member, you can brief your department on everything that we talk about in here. Does anyone else have a problem with the idea that it just says "major changes" without defining what "major changes" might be or am I the only one who is a little worried about that?

R. Feurer: What would you suggest?

A. Rosenbaum: Maybe we want a list of items regardless of how large or small it is. Certainly I don't think we want an announcement made every time they decide to get rid of a tattered copy of a novel. So, we don't want to do that, but we also don't want a situation where someone gets rid of 1000 items and doesn't feel that that's major because last time we got rid of 10,000 items. So I would think we might want at least a little bit more description of the rules?

S. Willis: I was on the Libraries Advisory Committee when some of this came through and as I recall, one of the arguments made by the Library administration was that they were following

existing guidelines and the fact that they had gotten rid of 25,000 documents where they had been averaging maybe 1000 a year didn't really make any difference. So, one thing might be to make it not necessarily an exact number but perhaps a percentage increase and if they're getting rid of twice as many as usual or something like that.

A. Rosenbaum: Well, we can certainly ask them to do a little bit better than just saying, "major," and to indicate what we're talking about here. I'll take a straw vote on this in a moment but before I do that, is there anything else that people think needs to be added or done with this response?

S. Martin: I'm just curious as to what the Math people think about this response?

A. Rosenbaum: I guess we don't have a math rep here. I think Math is now satisfied with the return of their materials, so they're at least satisfied on that score. I can't say whether or not they think this response is adequate because they're not here.

D. Goldblum: Is this for replacement of generals or are we talking also about discarding unaccessed books?

A. Rosenbaum: Resources, any library resources. In the Faculty Senate resolution, we wanted it to include everything, including electronics, documents, books, journals, whatever resources the library contains.

D. Goldblum: So could they then interpret that as being, if they're just replacing it with an electronic version, that's really not a change in the collection?

A. Rosenbaum: Well, it would be a change, not in the total collection, but it would involve the removal of items. So, it would fall under this. We also have been given a Faculty Senate liaison to the Libraries Advisory Committee, so we do have the equivalent of an ear and a spokesperson on the Libraries Advisory Committee.

A. Rosenbaum: called for a straw vote on whether we want to ask them to do a little bit better job of defining "major."

The vote was unanimous in favor of asking the LAC to be more specific about the term "major" in the LAC response to the FS resolution.

A. Rosenbaum: noted the reasons for posting materials to the Senate Blackboard website. I know some people may react and say, "Well, we just got it last night or we just got it the night before." This is in preference to you getting it when you walk in the door. In other words, these are things that formerly would have been handled as walk-in items at the Senate meeting. I did not want you to walk in the door and get an 8-page document or something that you had to think about. So, that's why we're posting that stuff on Blackboard. It's to give you a little bit more time to think about some of these things, talk about it with colleagues, so that when you come to the meeting, you are a little bit aware of what the things are we're going to be talking about.

VI. CONSENT AGENDA

VII. REPORTS FROM ADVISORY COMMITTEES

A. FAC to IBHE – Earl Hansen – [report](#) – page 3

E. Hansen: The meeting took place in Springfield on December 10th. I've got a rather lengthy report here. I'm just going to call your attention to paragraphs that I think are more interesting than others. George W. Reed, the Assistant Secretary of Planning of Academic Affairs for the Maryland Higher Education Commission has been appointed Executive Director of the Illinois Board of Higher Education. Mike Baumgartner, IBHE staff member, reported that none of the physical year 2011 MAP payments had been made as of November 30th to public universities and community colleges. The idea of limiting of MAPs to public institutions has been a continuing question that is brought up by the Faculty Advisory Committee and it seems to get absolutely nowhere close to coming to a conclusion in any way, shape or form.

B. BOT Academic Affairs, Student Affairs and Personnel Committee – Kerry Freedman and Ferald Bryan – no report

C. BOT Finance, Facilities, and Operations Committee – Alan Rosenbaum and Greg Waas – no report

D. BOT Legislation, Audit, and External Affairs Committee – Jay Monteiro and Todd Latham – no report

E. BOT – Jay Monteiro – [report](#) – page 7

J. Monteiro: The Board of Trustees met Thursday, December 2nd.

A. Information Technology services multiyear Blackboard licensing agreement, and what this does is this adds mobile access to our Blackboard system.

B. Northern Illinois Proton Treatment and Research Center grant agreements. A grant from the U.S. Department of Defense for \$9.4 million will be received over two years, and there is a potential of a third year of funding.

C. Finance and Facilities enterprise resource planning infrastructure replacement, and this is approval to fund another upgrade to the PeopleSoft system.

D. Selection of architectural engineering and consultants for projects related to campus non-instructional modernization. This is contingent upon IBHE approval, and this allows people to design and engineer, to pick engineer consultants for improvements to Grant Towers and Gilbert Hall, the Holmes Student Center and several of the roadways and infrastructures on campus as well as some new intramural fields that will be constructed over by the residence halls.

E. Collective bargaining agreement for the Metropolitan Alliance of Police. This was a small union agreement, and it affected about four employees on campus, and they are in the security guard area.

Then, President Peters gave his Vision 2020 plan. The BOT set the meeting dates for this year and then at the end, there was a resolution read and presented to Ken Davidson in honor of his retirement and his service to NIU.

A. Rosenbaum: Since Jay mentions the retirement of Ken Davidson, I should tell you that currently, we are engaging in a search for a new General Counsel. I am on the search committee representing the faculty and tomorrow, we are doing airport interviews with the candidates. The University is trying to get this done as expediently as possible because we are without a General Counsel at the moment.

F. Bryan: Under 4A, you mentioned that a number of Board of Trustees Executive Session Minutes were released for publication. Having been one several of us who do these reports and have had to sit for hours while they are in Executive Session, was there anything interesting about these reports?

J. Monteiro: I'll be honest, I don't know. When they report that, they just give the different dates that were released. They don't discuss the information that was in them.

F. Bryan: Do we know where the information is located?

A. Rosenbaum: I'm guessing there's an archive. We can find that out from the Secretary to the Board of Trustees.

T. Griffin: Two years ago when I requested some, I was told to file an FOIA.

A. Rosenbaum: I guess that's the mechanism, but we'll check with Sharon Banks Wilkens..

VIII. REPORTS FROM STANDING COMMITTEES

A. Academic Affairs – Charles Cappell, Chair – [Report](#) – walk-in

C. Cappell: The Academic Affairs Committee circulated several drafts of this report. All members of the Academic Affairs Committee weighed in, several with substantive comments and research items. Professor Martin was the first author of this report and conducted the comparative analysis. After the final version was prepared, the vote on the Academic Affairs Committee was 9-0 to bring this forward to the Senate.

The very, very quick summary is that the Academic Affairs Committee recommends the implementation of a full plus/minus system except for the D- grade. It recognizes that faculty and instructors have full authority over the grading system actually implemented in their classes as designated in their syllabi, and it recognizes that this has to be done in the context of the costs that might be involved. So, to take you through some of the justifications and rationales, I will recognize Professor Martin as the first author here.

S. Martin: I can tell you the impetus for this came about because there are many faculty who feel that the current system of grades that we have at NIU is too coarse-grained. I can say that in

the Department of Physics, I took a survey last year, and of course, this is anecdotal, but something like 2/3 were in favor of a change. The second leading vote getter was, "Don't care." I think there were one or maybe two faculty members who were against it. So, it is an issue that I think a lot of faculty members would like to see addressed.

I'll go over some of the motivations for making a change. I think the most important one is that it would give a more accurate representation of student performance and achievement. In the current system, if you've got a student who gets a B, you have a situation where you can have a high B+ and a low B- getting exactly the same grade, and in many courses, that difference is actually reflective of a substantial and meaningful difference in student achievement and performance. The second issue is fairness. In the current system, if you have a large course, you might have a situation where an 80 score gets a B and a 79 gets a C. Now, in any system, you've got to make some cutoff somewhere, and it's always going to be difficult to make such a cutoff, but if we go to a plus/minus system, what would happen is you could give the 80 a B- and the 79 a C+ and then the small difference in actual performance would be more reflected by the actual grade given. There are some other advantages or motivations for a change, but I want to keep this brief. So, I will let you read the report for those.

For any change, there, of course, are always going to be concerns. I think maybe the most important concern has been the possible negative effect on student GPA. In fact, I think many of the students at that time (2004-2005) expressed a lot of concern about this because if you have a system where you have an A- but you don't have an A+, then you can imagine the average GPA is going to go down and certainly specific student's GPAs will go down. You will have fewer 4.0s. We recognized that as a valid concern, and the way we wanted to address that was to have the possibility of an A+ which would count as a 4.33 in computing the GPA. So, if an excellent student does get an A- and is striving to get a 4.0, there is still a possibility of doing that by getting an A+ in another course. There also is a concern from students who might get a D- and for many reasons, students need to keep a 2.0 for financial aid and other reasons. So, that's one of the reasons why we chose not to put in a D- grade, to help students who may be on the borderline there. Of course, when you're talking about GPA, of course, in some courses, you may get an A- whereas you would have gotten an A before, but that's going to be partially balanced out by students who might get a B but now would get a B+. Studies on the impact on GPA are very difficult, but what's been found mostly in the past is that impact on student GPA is pretty minimal actually when you go to a plus/minus system.

Moving on to a second concern, in some disciplines, this increased differentiation of a plus/minus system may not be viewed as meaningful as most of us in say Physics do. I want to emphasize that implementing this change would not force any professor or even any department to give plus/minus grades. This should be left up to the individual instructor.

Then the third concern, perhaps I think the most practical concern, is that of cost. Any sort of change that one makes is going to cost money and have logistical difficulties. So we did make a couple of informal requests to Gip Seaver to get a cost estimate. We did not succeed in getting a cost estimate. I think one thing that would be very important is if we do move forward with this, which I hope we do, is that we should make a formal request for a cost estimate.

Okay, moving on, if we make a change, many people had suggested things like going to a purely numerical system. That's the ultimate in fine-graining grades. But, I think it's important to recognize the value in having a system that is similar to what's commonly in place at other universities. We would not serve our students well if we implement a grading system that is viewed by graduate schools and potential employers as obscure. So, that is one of the reasons why we did a survey of systems in use in other universities and you can see the tables in the report. We looked at four categories, public Illinois universities, major private area universities, Mid-American Conference universities and Big 10 universities including Nebraska, which doesn't join until next year. In Illinois public universities, most of them do not have plus/minus systems. The exceptions are Urbana-Champaign, Springfield and Western Illinois, which very recently within the last few years, made the change to plus/minus. Among major private area institutions, Chicago, DePaul, Illinois Institute of Technology, Northwestern, Notre Dame, Washington U, all but one use a plus/minus system. In the Mid-American Conference, all but two, (one of them being us) uses a plus/minus system, or there is a half-step system where you have basically something in between an A and a B and between a B and a C. Finally, in the Big 10 universities, all of them without exception use a more finely-grained system. Two of them have a half-step and the others use plus/minus grades.

Addressing all of these concerns led us to the recommendation that we came up with for a grading system. You will see that it does give an A+ but outside institutions often are based on a high of a 4.0. They expect that, and if you give them GPAs that aren't based on that scale, what they do is they round it down to 4.0 anyway. So, for that reason, we recommend that the average GPA of each student be capped at 4.00. So, you can get a 4.33 for an A+, but you still average it in and then cap the average.

There are other things in the report. I hope you will take the time to read it. Just to summarize the bullet points, the proposed system that we're recommending would provide a more accurate reflection of achievement and performance. I think it addresses valid concerns about impact on student GPAs by having an A+, by not having a D-. It is consistent with other universities and expectations of outside institutions by having this cap at 4.0. One thing I might mention is the system we are proposing is nearly identical to the one used by the University of Iowa. The situation as it stands is a little bit asymmetric because as it stands, if you like the system, you can give letter grades and you don't have to worry about plus/minus grades, but those of us who want to give plus/minus grades cannot do so. We do not have that option.

J. Kowalski: One question that occurs to me is at universities that have adopted this, did you find out whether or not, once it's adopted, there's an expectation that professors will use this system? Then a second part of that question might be, do students come to expect that the professors will adopt a kind of a uniform, sort of scoring standard. For example, that I don't know, you know, that 87.5 and above or 92.5 and below represents an A- and a B+.

S. Martin: I can't really answer any questions about how expectations have transpired at other institutions that have adopted this. I think it's worth recognizing that even with the current system, with any system that you adopt, there are always going to be differences in the way courses are treated by different instructors. Different professors have very divergent attitudes

about what an A is and what a B is, and there's no avoiding that. I think it's essentially independent of what system you adopt.

C. Cappell: There was a fairly extensive review of the impact of the plus/minus system at Ball State University, I believe. It was an Indiana University. And part of that was a survey, and they asked faculty, "How much do you use the plus/minus system?" It was in the, I think it's in the notes in the references. It may be between 60-80% or so of the faculty that were surveyed eventually chose to use the plus/minus system to some appreciable extent. So, I think once it's in place and diffused, that there is a tendency to make use of it. I just would reinforce Steven's point that this does not impose a standardization across courses and disciplines. There is a great diversity in how grades are assigned. We know grades are socially produced and that's why in the assessment arena, you generally cannot use a grade as a summary measure of actual student learning, because of the variable nature of it, and that's not going to change.

P. Henry: I think this looks really convincing, and I did mention it to a couple of my colleagues and again, anecdotally, there was a lot of support for it. Is this going to be for both graduate and undergraduate students and I think, especially in the case of graduate students where basically they can't get below a B, it would be extremely helpful to have a little more finer grain rather than just two big buckets to put them in. So, I'm all for it.

A. Rosenbaum: This proposal is for both undergraduate and graduate grading?

C. Cappell: That's correct.

J. Marchewka: The concern I have is, it seems like we're trying to tweak an archaic system and in fact, it's not even a system, it's three systems. Because if I grade, I grade based on exams, assignments on 100-point scale or percentage. So, now a student gets 90%. I have to convert that to a letter grade. So, okay, that's an A. Then, it has to be converted to a GPA number, 3.6. So, why are we even bothering with a letter grade system? It would be so much easier for me to take a percentage grade, points or whatever, however I lay it out in my syllabus and say, "Okay, this student instead of getting a 90% and so that's an A, it's 3.6, or if it's less than 90%, it's 3.59 or it's above 90% and it's a 3.61." So, I'm not sure having to do three different things to accomplish one thing is really the answer.

M. Kostic: I have two comments. I think A+ doesn't make sense in my judgment. Everything else is okay, just a little improvement from having so many bins, now we have more many bins, but having a decimal system is the best. It continues to the two decimal places and GPA is a decimal anyhow. But, this is better than previous. Influence of this system to GPA should not be any statistically to large samples.

A. Rosenbaum: I think if I understood the committee, what they were saying is the reason for having the A+ in there but not allow someone to get an A+ average is that there would be a less negative impact on overall GPA.

D. Zahay Blatz: I wanted to thank the committee. This is a very well prepared and thoughtful report and I wanted to speak in defense of the A+ and ask a question. Prior to coming here, I had

always taught in the plus/minus system. I think I gave two or three A+ in six years, and these were just students that were clearly superior, and I was grateful to have that way to acknowledge them, but it wasn't something that I gave out on a regular basis. So, I would be in favor of that and I agree if somebody is really trying to go for a 4.0 and they get an A- in one class, they can really work hard in another class and still get that. But the question that I had was regarding our college where we have, in the College of Business, where you have to have a minimum GPA to get in. Was any thought given to what is going to happen during this transition period? Would that affect the minimum GPA requirements in any way and was there any precedence that you looked at? Do GPAs go up or down slightly as we're transitioning?

C. Cappell: The few reports that I read that were detailed studies did not really address the issue of how entrance requirements were adjusted. As pointed out, the averages should not be dramatically different among undergrads with the balanced system, particularly if you include the A+ to offset A-. The Ball State study, which did investigate the transition, did show faculty used the system, adopted it fairly early and used it fairly extensively. They found that the GPA of graduate students did drop slightly, but they did not have an A+ in their system. So, our sense was that if you're functioning right now in the graduate program, it doesn't address your concerns about the undergraduate, but at the graduate program, you're basically confined to two graded, A and B. You know, a C is really unacceptable work and you're not likely to have that very often. So, this plus/minus system allows you to better differentiate among your graduate students. I don't think that we see the problem of transition or how minimal standards would be adjusted would be a major impact on the new system.

A. Rosenbaum: I think the other thing to keep in mind is that, in accepting graduate students that are apparently applying from all over, from all different universities, and many of those universities, as we have now found out, use the plus/minus system, so you are already distinguishing people with plus/minus grades for admission.

B. Sagarin: I also want to acknowledge and thank the committee for this really informative document. I think when I go back to talk to my department about this, this will be very helpful in terms of informing the discussion. First I want to say that in response to the question about the A+, I see an A+ as being a very useful grade, particularly at the graduate level, to recognize truly exceptional performance, which at this point, really gets folded into a mass of As. So, I do think that it would be useful there. In terms of why a 4.0 max and why a letter system at all, certainly these are metrics that are pretty universally accepted and I think it would put our students and graduates at a severe disadvantage in terms of applying to graduate school, job applications that consider GPA if we were to try to blaze new ground and put our grades on a very different type of scale. So while I agree that I think a percentage grading may make more sense, I think that would need to be a change that we probably shouldn't pioneer. I also have one quick question which is in your investigation. Did you find information about the quantity of grade appeals that happen? Because certainly one of the concerns that was raised in faculty discussion in my department is this question of since so many more students will be close to a border, what does that do to the rate of appeals?

C. Cappell: It was not a major topic of any of the research that we reviewed .

A. Rosenbaum: One of the other things to consider is that although this type of a system will put more people close to a borderline, it also makes the stakes lower. So if you are concerned that I just missed an A and now I have a B, you're going to be much more passionate, I would guess, then if you have a B versus a B+ or a B- versus a B. So, those two might balance each other out,

D. Goldblum: Just a quick observation. In the Board of Trustees report, there is a 10-year upgrade to PeopleSoft coming up, so it might be the time to actually make this change when they are upgrading the system already and the lower cost potentially.

C. Cappell: On the point of cost, there really is no survey that we have done to establish any benchmarks. But the Ball State report, which is pretty comparable to NIU I think, gave an estimate when this was done 4 or 5 years ago of about \$70,000 to implement it and about 600 person hours.

S. Willis: I think the PeopleSoft upgrade that they are talking about is the financials and not to the academic side because they were put in at different times. But presumably at some point, they will have to upgrade the academics and that would certainly be a reasonable time to make a change. I just want to make two other short comments. Since we look at GPAs on a 4.0 point scale, why don't we just issue grades on a 4.0 point scale and I think again, the reason for that is that we want to be consistent with everybody else and not only, we don't just look at the overall GPA, but I know when I'm looking at graduate applicants or transfer or whatever, I look at their grades also, I look at transcripts, and it's a lot easier for me to look at As and Bs and Cs with or without pluses and minuses and figure out what's going on, just because that's the language that we all speak. If we want to switch to speaking a different language, that's fine, but I think we all have to switch. Also, my undergraduate college did have, we actually used a 13-point system, which included A+, and I still remember and cherish my two A+ (pluses) very fondly. So, I would like to speak in favor of that as well.

A. Rosenbaum: We have a motion on the floor now to go to the plus/minus grading system. Just so we can be specific, of those choices in your report, this would be choice three. Okay, so the motion is that we adopt choice three. Before we go further with this, I would like to remind you that the history of this is somewhat checkered. This has been brought up several times over the last number of years and each time, the number of faculty supporting this is about equal to the number of faculty that are opposed to it and so because of the fact that it's a fairly substantial and permanent change and may incur some cost, I think it's very important that we be clear on exactly what percentage of our faculty are supportive of this. So, my recommendation, if our parliamentarian thinks it's okay to do this, is to hold off on the vote until our next meeting and to ask each of you to go back to your departments and take an actual vote on this issue, so when you come back next time, you are voting your department's wishes and not simply what you think ought to be done. That way, if we decide that this should go forward, if the vote is positive, we are sending it forward with a reasonable knowledge that the faculty of the University have weighed in on this and it's more than just the opinions of the Faculty Senate representatives.

F. Bryan: If this were to be voted on, this would be a major policy change and the Constitution does say that a major policy change should be introduced but not voted on until the second meeting. So I think we should treat this like a first reading of a major amendment with a vote for next meeting.

P. Henry: Will we be able to get electronic copies of this and spread it around to our departments?

A. Rosenbaum suggested that Senate members download the report from the FS Blackboard site and that they contact Pat Erickson if they had any problems doing that.

D. Goldblum: My other concern is we're kind of like the actual Senate that a lot of our members are in their chambers right now and aren't going to get this message to request votes from their departments. Is there a way we can make sure that all the representatives are informed of this that we actually get a larger sample?

A. Rosenbaum: Yes, we will get an email out either through the Blackboard or through our master list of Senate members.

C. Cappell: The intent of the Academic Affairs committee was to present this as a first reading, open up discussion for deliberation and then get the feedback at the next meeting, at which point a motion would be made.

F. Bryan: Treat it as unfinished business on the agenda of the next meeting.

A. Rosenbaum: Okay, it will be on the next agenda as unfinished business, and I would ask you please to go back and do as we just discussed and take an actual vote of your departments. You can do it by email; you can do it any way you like, just so we know that at the next meeting, the vote that we are getting represents the wishes of the faculty at large.

B. Economic Status of the Profession – Sonya Armstrong, Chair – no report

C. Faculty Rights & Responsibilities – Brad Cripe, Chair – no report

D. Resources, Space and Budgets –David Goldblum and Laurie Elish-Piper, Co-chairs – no report

D. Goldblum: We have an upcoming meeting with the President on February 22nd, and Laurie Elish-Piper and I wanted to ask you if you had any concerns you would like us to bring up with the President and if you do, to send one of us an email, and we will try to get it on the agenda for that meeting, on the 22nd of February.

E. Rules and Governance – Nancy Castle, Chair – no report

F. Elections and Legislative Oversight – David Wade, Chair

D. Wade: You may all have some concern as to what's going on with the Workload Policy Committee, of which I am a member. We have had a number of different meetings. We have essentially completed the draft. The assumption is, at that point, that we will be sending it out to various constituencies for comments, probably including this body, after review by the Provost and the President. So, I would suspect you will see something detailed and in writing I would think within the next month, certainly by the next Faculty Senate Meeting. To be perfectly honest with you, I'm excited about it. I think it's really a decent effort to try to deal with what is a very complex and thorny issue and it's been a real joy to be part of the committee. It's been a collegial body, a mixed body, but it seems like everybody has kept their eye on the ball and isn't, grinding their own axes or anything like that. So, I think you'll be pleased with our outcome, whether or not you agree with the policy.

A. Rosenbaum: Shared governance at its best.

D. Wade: Shared governance at its best. To be perfectly honest with you, it really was. I'm willing to answer any questions if you have any.

P. Henry: asked for a preview.

D. Wade: It's basically going to offer you a template upon which colleges and departments can craft it, tweak it, massage it, in their own ways. It does offer everyone an opportunity and an invitation to engage in a process to establish workload policies, given the unique demands of their disciplines. By the same token, it does require a disciplined method of justification for deviations from the standard, what would be referred to as the standard University workload. That does not mean that you can't do it. It doesn't even mean that you can't establish your own standards by which you'll judge whether those deviations are appropriate, but it will require some documentation of it and it does also assume that there will be individualized distinctions on the basis of workload as well, not only college and department distinctions but even down to the individual level if you so desire, based upon the sort of different and unique teaching or work functions that we do that don't include service and scholarship. Some people teach in clinical, some people supervise students, some people do dissertation committee, some people teach lecture classes in large lectures, some people teach small sections, so your ability as a college and department to deal with those unique characteristics is preserved in the document. My view is that the greatest danger here is the possibility that colleges and departments could not involve their constituencies in a meaningful dialogue in establishing their policies and instead attempt to ram them down the throat through a limited vetting process. Therefore, there will be a great premium placed on faculty members particularly, demanding that their voices be heard. If you sit on your hands and do nothing, you will get what they give you. But there is, and I fought explicitly for the sentence in the document, that faculty will be involved in both the creation of the original one and any modifications of that system as it goes along. It's explicit in the document. Therefore, it's up to faculty to step up and do it and as you well know, many times the service function gets short shifted.

1. Selection of a committee for the evaluation of the Executive Secretary of University Council and President of Faculty Senate – see Faculty Senate [Bylaws, Article 7](#) – page 8

D. Wade: First, we are going to select people who are going to review Alan Rosenbaum in his roles as Executive Secretary of the University Council and President of the Faculty Senate. Two members must be picked from the Faculty Senate who are not University Council members. Tim Griffin, our neutral Ombudsman, will draw the names. The winners are Gina Nicolosi, and Sonya Armstrong. We also need two members of this body who are also members of the University Council, and they are Brad Sagarin and Laurie Elish-Piper. Last but not least, we need one student rep on this committee, and that student rep will be Lexi Weber from the College of Education.

2. Selection of a committee for the evaluation of the Faculty and SPS Personnel Advisor – see Faculty Senate [Bylaws, Article 7](#) – page 8

D. Wade: Now we need to select three from this body who will evaluate David Wade, the Faculty & SPS Personnel Advisor. Richard Greene, Valia Allori, and Stephen Tonks were selected by random draw.

IX. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

X. NEW BUSINESS

XI. COMMENTS AND QUESTIONS FROM THE FLOOR

D. Wade: Regarding the +/- grading policy, if we are going to make a recommendation. To whom and what power does that have?

A. Rosenbaum: The recommendation that we come up with will be made to the University Council.

S. Martin: Regarding making a formal request for a cost estimate, I don't know whether we would be the ones who would do that or University Council would.

A. Rosenbaum: We can do that but you can be sure that will be brought up for us anyway.

XII. INFORMATION ITEMS

- A. [Committee on Initial Teacher Certification – October 15, 2010 minutes](#)
- B. [University Assessment Panel – November 5, 2010 minutes](#)
- C. [Undergraduate Coordinating Council – November 4, 2010 minutes](#)
- D. [Committee on Undergraduate Curriculum – September 16, 2010 minutes](#)
- E. [Committee on Undergraduate Curriculum – October 14, 2010 minutes](#)
- F. [Committee on Undergraduate Curriculum – November 11, 2010 minutes](#)
- G. [Committee on Undergraduate Curriculum – November 18, 2010 minutes](#)

- H. [Annual Report – Athletic Board](#)
- I. [Committee on Advanced Professional Certification in Education – October 4, 2010 minutes](#)
- J. [Committee on Advanced Professional Certification in Education – November 1, 2010](#)

XIII. ADJOURNMENT

A.Rosenbaum: Called for a motion to adjourn. The motion was made and seconded by Senate members and passed unanimously.

Meeting adjourned at 4:23 p.m.