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## UC Minutes 2011-02-26

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**UNIVERSITY COUNCIL MINUTES**  
**Wednesday, February 16, 2011, 3 p.m.**  
**Holmes Student Center Sky Room**

**Disclaimer:** These minutes should not be taken as a verbatim transcript but rather as a shortened summary that is intended to reflect the essence of statements made at the meeting. Many comments have been omitted and, in some cases, factual and grammatical errors corrected. The full verbatim transcript is available online at the University Council Web site under Faculty Senate / Agendas, Minutes & Transcripts.

**Present:** Arntz, Bennardo, Bishop, Bowers, Brandt, Brubaker, Bruce, Butler, Carter, Coles, Cunningham, Dawson, Elish-Piper, Gilbert, Green, Greene, Griffin, Gupta, Haliczzer, Hansen, Hemphill, P. Henry, Holly, Houze, Hurt, Kaplan, Lash, Latham, Lee, Lenczewski, Lusk, McCord, Mirman, Mogren, Mohabbat, Monteiro, Newman, Quick, Richmond, Robertson, Rosenbaum, Sagarin, Seaver, Shortridge, Small, M C. Smith, R. Smith, Thu, Venaas, Willis, Yamagata-Lynch

Parliamentarian Ferald Bryan was present

**Absent:** Alden, Bond, Bozikis, Calmeyer, Cassidy, Castle, Collins, Cummings, Feurer, Freedman, Freeman, Gullio, Hall, Henderson, Jaffee, Kowalski, Neal, Prawitz, Rosato, Schoenbachler, Slotsve, Snow, Vohra, Von Ende, Waas, Weber, Williams

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

President John Peters called the meeting to order at 3:05 p.m.

**II. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA**

**J. Peters:** We have no walk-in items.

**K. Thu:** made a motion to accept the agenda. There was an unidentified second.

The agenda was approved as written and without dissent.

**J. Peters:** I've been reminded that in order for us to have a proper record of our proceedings, to grab the microphone and state your name before you do a motion, make a comment, or put forward an amendment or criticize the Executive Secretary.

**A. Rosenbaum:** Especially that.

### III. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF THE JANUARY 26, 2011 UC MEETING (sent electronically)

**T. Bishop:** Motion to approve the minutes

**J. Bowers:** was second.

Minutes were approved without correction or dissent.

### IV. PRESIDENT'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

**J. Peters:** I wanted to thank everyone who participated for the planning and coming to the activities of the February 14<sup>th</sup> reflection on Monday. It was beautifully done. I want to particularly thank the Student Affairs people who really are responsible for putting that together, and we had 2,000 people who came.

**J. Peters:** discussed the budget of the State of Illinois which had been announced earlier in the day by Governor Quinn. His (Quinn) speech focused mostly on reduced funding levels and emphasized the importance of restructuring the State's unpaid bills backlog by borrowing approximately \$8.75 billion to pay off most of the outstanding debt owed to hundreds of service providers throughout the State, including NIU and all the State universities.

The Governor was straightforward and forthright when he stated that fiscal 2012 would be a lean year for State spending. Despite this, the Governor made it clear that he believes education spending represents an investment by the State in its future and when he says education, we know he always means K12 and maybe pre-K12 and you have to see if that concept extends to post-secondary education and higher education. The spending plan he presented calls for level funding for public universities. That is the same general revenue allocation as appropriated for fiscal year 2011. Considering the fiscal health of the State of Illinois and the history of declining State funding for higher education, the budget proposal put forth by Governor Quinn for public universities and other entities in higher education; I think it's as realistic and as optimistic as possible, given the State's dire financial circumstances. So, budgeting at NIU will continue to be very tight. Of course, when inflation is considered and the additional mandates that we will have to accommodate, payment for veteran's tuition, so on and so forth, perhaps new healthcare costs, a flat budget amounts to a budget reduction. Put that in perspective in terms of what is happening to other states around us in terms of budget cuts to their universities and I think this is as optimistic as it can be. But you know the bad news is, as I have said many times, we don't have a budget problem, we've got a cash flow problem.

Another bit of good news gleaned from just a quick, cursory look at the budget, it appears that all of our capital appropriations, meaning buildings, previously approved for NIU remain intact. Cole Hall is taken care of, the money is here, and we received some disbursements for Stevens for planning. The Governor used his budget address before the Joint Session of the General Assembly to advocate for his legislative proposal to restructure the \$8.75 billion backlog of bills. The money in this borrowing bill would be used to cover outstanding bills the state owes to NIU and other public universities, municipalities, schools, social service providers, etc. We are currently owed \$77 million with just over four months remaining in the fiscal year, so it's worse

than it was last year at this time by \$15 million. Then, we haven't received MAP funding (\$12 million) for the fall.

Due to the great cooperation and planning of all divisions at the University and the efforts of our faculty and staff to conserve and creatively work and deliver our quality education experience under extremely tight budgetary constraints, we have continued to maintain our programs and try not to let it show on students. We have met our payroll. We invest where absolutely necessary in our facility infrastructure and address safety and related matters while positioning the University in a very highly competitive region. We're managing, utilizing the strategies and priorities that we put in place two years ago and you know them well, employment freeze, lengthen winter shutdown, limited travel, maintenance and repairs on hold except for health, safety and those sorts of things

The Senate Republican leadership in Springfield has declared the Governor's borrowing plan to be dead on arrival, and I really hope that's not the case. I can understand the perspective though. Let me put this in perspective, the 35<sup>th</sup> Congressional Senatorial District, the district we're in, which is composed of two General Assembly districts, Bob Pritchard and now Joe Sosnowski, make one Senate district, which Christine Johnson inherited from Brad Burzynski. But that 35<sup>th</sup> Senate District is home to NIU, Kishwaukee College, Kishwaukee Health Systems and dozens of social service providers that, if you take a look at the debt and you allocated it by Senate district, the 35<sup>th</sup> is owed \$104 million by the State this year alone and remember we're \$77 million of that. Our region is in the unenviable position of being ranked 5<sup>th</sup> in outstanding state payments owed to service providers throughout the State. Many of the big ticket districts that are owed have what in their districts? Universities. What's your conclusion? Who has been bearing the cash flow crisis for the State? It's universities in large part.

The debate over our proposed budget has already begun and the only certainties are that the budgeting process is likely to be protracted and partisan and nasty. Now, in addition, then there are the things that were not mentioned that have to be addressed and then there are legislative issues that are unrelated to the budget that we are watching. But I just want to talk a little bit about one issue, that's really a budget issue that probably has to be addressed and that's pension reform, that's the 1,000- pound gorilla in the room. Even though the subject of pension reform was not a centerpiece of the Governor's budget message itself today, the importance of public pension underfunding is the single most important financial issue facing the State and is at the core of every discussion on the budget in Springfield. As employees, we faithfully and regularly contributed our 8% of gross earnings to the SURS pension plan during your tenure at NIU. You're not eligible for Social Security under SURS. Unfortunately, our political leaders have for years, underfunded the pension plans and so now there's a real crisis. NIU's pension and budgeting tracking, monitoring website is up and running and is accessible through NIU Today in the faculty/staff homepages and the URL is: [www.niu.edu/budget](http://www.niu.edu/budget). Our Government Relations staff is providing weekly reports via NIU Today to the NIU community. I urge you to read those and also to reach out to your legislators and express your opinion on the various proposals that will be before the General Assembly. We had a meeting of the IBHE yesterday and the presidents and the chancellors were all together for a meeting and we're all concerned about this. Our higher education system is really the envy of many. We've got a nicely differentiated public higher education system with high, high-end research institutions and great four-year and

great community colleges. So, I'm confident that over the next several months, our government leaders are going to come together through compromise to put forth a comprehensive plan to address this situation so that they can move forward. Now, I think we need major tax reform, all that, and Governor Quinn did announce a commission to look at this, but there is an increase in revenue, that's number one. Number two, I think what has to happen is fiscal discipline, and that is spending really does need to be controlled and programs need to be looked at and everything should be on the table. I suppose that includes pensions and to take a look to see if we can't figure out ways to make that work while not denying their constitutionally guaranteed pension. Number three, again, I don't see a way, short term, of solving this without some sort of bonding to pay off the bills that are owed. Now what happens, moving forward, there will be appropriation hearings coming up in March. Now, I do know that states around us, their higher education systems, their budgets are being reduced in real terms. Michigan tomorrow will announce the budget, and they're expecting anywhere from a 5 to a 20% cut in their base budget. Wisconsin seems to be in a turmoil over a lot of things. I think our problem is a cash flow problem and not necessarily a budget problem.

**A. Gupta:** suggested that NIU publish the names and contact information for legislators and also wondered whether the NIU email system could be used to make such contacts.

**J. Peters:** My advice is check with our Government Affairs office or Steve Cunningham to make sure that whatever you do, you do in a proper way. Our Annuitants Association, which is, that's a separate entity, is a very good source for this sort of information because they're actively involved.

**A. Rosenbaum:** My understanding is that you shouldn't use the NIU email system for that sort of activity and it's easy enough to get a Gmail account or some other account that you can use to send email on your own. But, you shouldn't use the NIU system.

**J. Peters:** I think what I need to do is to plan on making sure our staff who are knowledgeable, whether they're in Legal Affairs or Government Affairs, has answers to these questions to give you a proper interpretation of what you can and can't do.

## **V. CONSENT AGENDA**

## **VI. REPORTS FROM COUNCILS, BOARDS, AND STANDING COMMITTEES**

- A. FAC to IBHE – Earl Hansen – [report](#) – Page 3
- 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 – Alan Rosenbaum – no report
- F. Academic Policy Committee – Pat Henry, Chair – no report
- G. Resources, Space and Budgets Committee – Laurie Elish-Piper and David Goldblum, Co-chairs – [report](#) – Page 7
- H. Rules and Governance Committee – Suzanne Willis, Chair – [report](#) – Page 9

**J. Peters:** Alright, now Sue Willis has a Rules and Governance report on page 9.

**S. Willis:** Yes. Okay, we actually have two items here that are related and what I would like to do is address very briefly the second one, which actually starts on page 28. The item that starts on page 9 is a set of revisions to Article 11 of the bylaws concerning grievance procedures. The proposed revisions that start on page 28 to the Academic Policies and Procedures manual are included now essentially for information. These are changes that we should make assuming that the changes to Article 11 get passed. So, I would invite you to look at, and as you will see, essentially what we're doing is removing most of that particular item from the APPM because it has been replaced by Article 11. If we do not pass the proposed changes to Article 11, we will come back with a different set of deletions to that item in the APPM because a lot of it was already replaced by Article 11 when it was originally passed back in 2004 and ought to be removed anyway because it is duplicative and confusing. But in any case, so the APPM revisions are included right now for information. What I would like to do is move those after we act on the revisions to Article 11, which is what starts on page 9.

**J. Peters:** This is a first reading.

**S. Willis:** Yes. Now starting on, now pages 9 and 10 is a brief summary of the changes that we are proposing and then pages 11 through 27 include the entirety of Article 11 with the changes indicated in the usual fashion where things that we are omitting are struck out and things that we are adding are underlined. So, I would like to move this as a first reading that we make these changes.

**P. Henry:** Second.

**D. Haliczzer:** There were several changes that we had proposed, and so one of the items is in 11.5.32(h). And we're questioning why one of the items was eliminated from the final draft, and that's the item that says: "Summary of the principle evidence presented in support of the charge or charges in a preliminary list of witnesses, the University administration plans to call." One of the purposes for including that line was to make sure that both the grievant and the grievance hearing board, would have not just the charges, but the justification for a termination for cause.

**D. Haliczzer:** So, what we were requesting was more information about the evidence, not just what the charges were but pieces of evidence that justify the termination for cause. So, can you give us your thinking on that?

**S. Willis:** We met with a lot of people, including University legal counsel and my recollection of that meeting, was that they felt that that had already been covered. I mean, I personally have no objection to putting that back in. If the rest of the committee is happy with it, I would be willing to accept it as a friendly amendment.

**J. Peters:** Alright, so that was accepted as a friendly amendment and will be inserted for the second reading.

**T. Latham:** I first want to say it was a very fair process. I appreciate the fact that our Ad Hoc committee met with the Rules and Governance committee initially and then I was able to address the chair with some other issues and we, quite frankly, have gotten almost all of them resolved. But, as my official responsibility, the one item that I think we have remaining is the title of the Senior Administrative Human Resource Office. It's an okay title under 11.2.8 where the grievance procedure indicates that it's filed with the Executive Secretary who then forwards it to the SAHR, and that's fine because that individual might specifically know who the SAHR is. However, when you go onto 11.5.1, it specifically says that the complainant then will file the grievance form if it's not resolved to their level of satisfaction with the SAHR again. My concern is that with new hires, it might be misconstrued who that person is. I also want to just make sure that it's consistent throughout the document. I understand the intent and I certainly respect that the term is something that would be almost generic that we wouldn't have to go back and amend, but my question is, in doing so, does it kind of undermine the process and truthfully, the confidentiality of this grievance procedure. There's not that title on a website or under someone's business cards or on their office. So, I'm just concerned that when we have a title, it's the right title to the right person with the right intent.

**T. Bishop:** I speak to that because I'm at least partly responsible for the alternative language and actually, Todd, I think that what we're proposing address that issue superior to the point of putting a specific title in. Putting a specific title in, and as Steve Cunningham will tell you, his title has changed quite a few times over the years he's been here and so each time that changes, we would have to change the bylaws to accommodate his new title. The language, in its more generic form, allows that flexibility for the bylaws to live on while the names change. Obviously, what this requires then is somebody is known as or is distinguished as the Senior Administrator of Human Resources. Whether that's a Senior VP, VP, Director, Assistant to the VP, or what have you. Now, I understand that there's a lack of clarity under either set of circumstances, but this is probably preferable and more workable over the long term, and that's why I feel that this is the appropriate way to handle it.

**S. Cunningham:** We'll have a little, some not major, but some additional feedback for the committee here between first and second reading and perhaps we can address that issue too with that feedback.

**J. Peters:** So, what I'm hearing you say, you've got a few things that you want to discuss with the committee that would help the document, including perhaps this?

**D. Haliczzer:** What we had suggested and what we really would like you all to think about is the

title, VP, HR or Designee, which means that it goes to Steve or one of a very few of the rest of us. The whole purpose the SPS Council had in bringing this forward was because we were very concerned about ambiguity and confusion on the part of people who needed to file grievances and so we're trying to direct them to a single document and a single person. So, we want this to be as specific as possible. That being said, we really appreciate the Council acting on this, and you have the great thanks of all of our SPS Council.

**A. Rosenbaum:** One thing I'd like to add, in support of what Deb and Todd are saying is that our experience with the Constitution is that it seems to outlast the people who framed the various pieces of it, and we very often find ourselves wondering, "What did they mean by this or what was the purpose of this?" So, the more specific we can make it, the easier it is for people down the road who will not know what we had in mind here when we rewrote this.

**C. McCord:** A few things very quickly. First of all, on that specific point, on page 21, I think it's 11.5.34(b), the old title, I think it's the one place where it wasn't changed to SAHR.

**C. McCord:** My real point was again, in desire for clarity after the document is established and those who wrote it are perhaps no longer there to describe it, I've had a recent conversation with Steve Cunningham and I hope between this and the next reading, there are some fine distinctions between dismissal for cause and nonrenewal of a term appointment. There is a small shade of meaning, which is explicitly differentiated in the old document and which is only implicit in the new document by silence and asking people to interpret silence is always a little more risky. So, I would just ask if there is a need to clarify the distinction between how grievances involving dismissal for cause and grievances involving nonrenewal of a term contract are handle

**S. Willis:** Well, we did add a new definition in the appendix where we defined dismissal for cause.

**C. McCord:** Right, and I note again, it is silent on nonrenewal but again, it is only by silence that you infer that it's not included and silence again, I would suggest, is always a possibly risky way to know what is and isn't included.

**D. Haliczzer:** I think some of that ambiguity, Chris, could be remedied in a revision that needs to happen to the original APPM document that talked about SPS policies and procedures, including language about nonrenewal, language about termination for cause and the committee has looked at that document. SPS Council and HR I think also, if I can speak for you, Steve, need to see some changes in that document and I think that that could remedy most of the lack of clarity that you're raising.

**C. McCord:** I simply commend it to their attention.

**A. Rosenbaum:** I have a couple of items. One is, it's on page 18 and the item says, "No further information shall be provided to the grievant in this case except at the discretion of the grievance committee." When we started this, the General Counsel for the University gave us his opinion that the grievant would have the right to some of that information. So, I'm wondering if this was hashed out with the General Counsel; if there was some consideration of that issue.



**S. Willis:** I guess I'll have to get back to the General Counsel on that. I was under the impression that that was something that did not have to be disclosed in that case.

**A. Rosenbaum:** The committee doesn't have to necessarily follow the General Counsel's opinion, but that was what was recommended. Secondly, in item (h) below that where it says, "Once scheduled, the Executive Secretary and a SAHR shall immediately notify." I think when you have the "and" in there and two different people are responsible for doing the same thing, it can become confusing. I don't know why just one of the two can't be designated as the person to do that. There would be no problem with the Executive Secretary doing that.

**T. Latham:** I do have a response maybe to the question about why the grievance committee would have some release of information at their discretion. In our discussions, we talked about the possibility of retaliation or even some concerns or threats that might be made against the members or an uncomfortable situation. So, I know in our discussions, we kind of agreed that there might be some information that would not be released just to kind of protect the grievance committee in some way.

**A. Rosenbaum:** It is the only situation in which the names of the committee are not available to the grievant. If the hearing panel were to decide there were grounds and then go onto have a hearing, the grievant would know exactly who was on the committee. So, we wouldn't want this to be a way for the committee to avoid that sort of disclosure.

**T. Latham:** Right, and I agree with that. I think it was in the case where the committee was formed and they decided not to hear the case that their names then wouldn't be released. I think that was one scenario we looked at as well.

**A. Rosenbaum:** I think we just have to find out more about how significant that issue is and whether we are doing something that is violating somebody's legal rights by not disclosing that information.

**S. Cunningham:** We'll follow up on the comments that you made Alan and also with respect to that matter as part of our coordinated responses as we go through to the second reading. The General Counsel was concerned about due process rights. I know we discussed that and so we'll flesh that out a little more with the legal counsel as we provide feedback. There are interesting things in the procedure about custody of documents and administration of the procedure and it is, in many cases, a jointly administered procedure with the executive secretary and my office. So, we'll try to clarify those points where they exist if there is ambiguity about who does what and we can still do that.

**A. Rosenbaum:** The last point I have is that under 11.5.34(c), this is all new language and specifies a different procedure for SPS and faculty with regards to whether the grievance ends with the President or whether it's transmitted to the Board of Trustees. Could you just talk a little bit about why the two separate processes or what the committee was thinking in doing it this way?

**S. Willis:** This just preserves the existing situation. This, the text on page 21 and 11.5.34(c) comes directly from the existing procedures for dismissal for cause of SPS that are now in the APPM and we did not change them. So, we're not changing anything, we're just moving it to a different document. It's the same procedure.

**A. Rosenbaum:** Okay, but I'd still be interested in why there are different procedures for SPS and for faculty with regards to where the grievance ends. Was there any discussion of that?

**S. Willis:** No, there was not. Although, if I might add, this procedure does not cover dismissal for cause of faculty, that's covered elsewhere in the bylaws, and that is not something that we looked at in this context.

**A. Gupta:** At least one person who served on a grievance committee before, came to me and he said in the future, he would not serve on a committee if the names are disclosed in the case of denial of further proceeding. He feels very insecure if the names are released, so I thought just share that that sentiment is out there.

**S. Willis:** I was going to say, my original suggestion for that was rather than Senior Administrator, what I had said was the Vice President responsible for Human Resources, with an abbreviation of VPHR and my committee overruled me on that.

I. University Affairs Committee – M Cecil Smith, Chair – report

1. 2020-21 [Academic Calendar](#) – Page 3

**M C. Smith:** I would like to move on behalf of the University Affairs committee that the academic calendar for 2021 be approved.

**T. Latham:** Second.

The motion was approved without dissent or abstention.

2. [Guidelines](#) and Principles for Establishment of Academic Calendar – Page 38

**C M. Smith:** So then moving on, on the back page of your academic calendar, guidelines and principles for establishment of academic calendar, you see some edits, some additions to this document, which these changes basically indicate specific days of the week for particular events. So again, on behalf of the University Affairs committee, I would like to make a motion that these changes be approved.

**R. Smith:** Second.

The motion was approved without dissent or abstention.

### 3. Comprehensive Review of the President

**M C. Smith:** Finally, if you'd looked at the agenda and saw this comprehensive review of the President, you may have wondered where this came from. So, I'd like to give you a little background as the University Affairs committee was tasked with preparing a review of the President. I'll refer you to bylaw number 18.7, Performance Reviews in the Constitution, 18.71, the President.

Now, I'll give you some relevant dates. President Peters' tenure began on June 1<sup>st</sup> of 2000. The beginning of his sixth year of appointment was June 1, 2005. So, at that time, according to the Constitution bylaw 18.71, a performance review should have been conducted by University Council. I do not believe that that occurred. The beginning of his 10<sup>th</sup> year of appointment was June 1, 2009, so again, a performance review should have been conducted at that time according to the bylaws and again, I don't believe that that occurred. So, University Affairs discussed the possibility of conducting a performance review at this time. We decided against that and rather to make a motion to conduct a performance review which would be on schedule at the beginning of the 14<sup>th</sup> year of appointment, which would be June 1, 2013. So, I would make a motion that University Council conduct a performance review of the President at the beginning of the 14<sup>th</sup> year of appointment in 2013.

**S. Willis:** Second.

**J. Peters:** My counsel was that this process, the major responsibility of the Board of Trustees is hiring, evaluating, selecting, terminating if need be, a president. The president goes through annual evaluations with the Board and contractually with five-year reviews. So, I have gone through 10 annual reviews and two major reviews. Now, I think what has to happen, is bringing into concordance that process, the trustee responsibility, which they will guard very jealously, as they should, with this process to make the one flow as input to the other, and that would be my suggestion, and I do think that the current trustees want to do that.

**C. McCord:** President Peters, could you clarify whether the five-year is specified somewhere in Board regs or anything like that?

**J. Peters:** No.

**C. McCord:** Or is that simply current practice of the Board?

**J. Peters:** That is practice and sometimes it's embedded within contracts.

**C. McCord:** Okay, but to bring those in accord with something which is in the Constitution and bylaws, potentially we would need to worry about those being things that sit on rather different levels and operate in rather, according to different people's wills.

President Peters call for a vote on the motion which passed without dissent.

J. Elections and Legislative Oversight Committee – Abhijit Gupta, Chair – no report

## VII. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

## VIII. NEW BUSINESS

## IX. COMMENTS AND QUESTIONS FROM THE FLOOR

**A. Rosenbaum:** Just a quick question for Dr. Seaver. Some of the students were asking about the plus/minus grading process. Earl referred to this earlier. As many of you know, certainly the faculty members on Council know, the Faculty Senate overwhelmingly passed a motion to endorse a plus/minus grading policy for the University. That recommendation from the Senate is being given over to the academic councils, the Undergraduate and Graduate Council and APASC and the students I think are wondering about how student input will be woven into this, what the timeline is, what process happens next. As far as the Council is concerned, whatever comes to us from those academic councils will have to be ultimately approved by the University Council because we have to approve all changes in the language of the various policies. But could you talk to us a little bit about what the process is going to be and how the students will be able to have input into it?

**E. Seaver:** The policy that was approved by Faculty Senate and Alan and I have already talked about this, will go to APASC, and the meetings of APASC are up on the University Council website but if you can't find those, you're certainly welcome to contact my office and we'll provide you with the date of that. So it will go there first and then any recommendations that come out of APASC will then go to the Undergraduate Coordinating Council. Those dates are also published. We do have student membership on UCC. We were supposed to have undergraduate representative on APASC, I'm not sure how many students have that, but Pat I believe those memberships are also on the University Council website so you can see who the representatives are. But when this came through a few years ago, APASC and UCC were very willing to have students attend to give their input at that point as well. As far as the Graduate School is concerned, that will go through the Graduate Council. But for the undergraduates, those will be the meetings and we intend to bring the proposal to APASC at the next meeting of APASC, which I believe is around the first Wednesday or second Wednesday of March. We're kind of in the off cycle with Faculty Senate and University Council. But, if you can't find us, you're certainly welcome to contact my office and we can give you those dates, but they're on the University Council website, as is the membership.

**A. Quick:** We had a few conversations the other day. I guess the major concern for myself and for many of the students that I have spoken with is the first we heard of this for many of us, and a lot of us are student leaders that are very involved, is what we saw in the Northern Star and it kind of scared a lot of students because we haven't heard anything and all of a sudden we see that the Faculty Senate picture with everyone voting, as you said, almost unanimously, and it scared a lot of students. How are we supposed to inform the entire student body that they can go to these meetings?

**E. Seaver:** Well, if you're planning on having 18,000 students there, it would be helpful for me to know because I need to go get the Convo Center rather than 225 and 203. The last time this came up, we did work with the Student Association leadership. I would be happy to meet with

you, to talk to you about how the process will play out. There are a number of issues that need to be discussed about this. I have people working already and trying to answer some of those questions about costs and how this would work and so, we're already looking at those issues and we will bring that information forward so that the faculty and students on that committee can make the most informed decision. One of my roles is to be the liaison with the Student Association as it relates to academic areas and so if you want to get a hold of me, we can set up a meeting and talk about it and we can talk about maybe what's the best way.

So, if you want to get a hold of me, we can set up a meeting to certainly start to talk about the process and how you might start to get that information out to the students.

**A. Quick:** And just for my sake, since I wasn't here four or five years ago, was this a proposal before and it did not pass?

**E. Seaver:** That is correct. It was primarily, I think it was really a whole different process and it's hard to compare what happened the last time versus this time. There's been a lot more open discussion about it this time at the Faculty Senate level. Last time, it just was brought forward to APASC where we tried to get a lot of information and we were in a different place at that time relative to our student information system. So, it was not supported, it was not supported by the students at that time for various reasons, It's been much more transparent this time than I think it was the last time.

**A. Quick:** And I guess my final question would be, as far as the process, once it goes through these committees, the final approval for whether or not we go to this system would be in University Council, am I correct on that?

**E. Seaver:** Ultimately, it comes to this group. UCC makes the decision, but this council does have the opportunity to review that and either send it back for further consideration or to accept it.

**A. Quick:** And currently what is the timeline for this as far as the process? Are we looking at this to be something that's finally decided upon towards the end of the school year or this academic school year or is it something we're just, that's my last question, where are we in this process?

**E. Seaver:** I would like to get this in front of the APASC as soon as we possibly can. We do not meet as committees once the school year ends The timeline will be however long it takes us to have, to move this in a timely fashion, to have a discussion, to make a decision.

**A. Rosenbaum:** If you are worried about this happening, for example, in the fall semester, the odds of that are pretty slim. We've talked about the likelihood, if this does go through, it probably wouldn't take effect until the fall semester of 2012.

**A. Quick:** So then the students that are currently here, say there are people who are freshman now, they would not be under that?

**E. Seaver:** These are all the discussions that faculty have to have as to how this is going, how it will impact students who are currently here and how it will happen with new students. So, those are all issues, and we have people in Registration and Records who are very well versed in the system, and we are also, have been in conversation with other universities that have plus/minus systems and have different types of plus/minus systems that are similar to the one that the Faculty Senate approved.

**P. Henry:** My students were fairly concerned about it too and one of the things that I got from that conversation with them is a lot of uncertainty about how this would work. I really think that the document that was brought forth from the Faculty Senate should be disseminated as widely as possible.

**J. Peters:** Good document.

**A. Rosenbaum:** The transcripts of the Faculty Senate are public record, and they can be accessed by anybody on our website, so people can see exactly what was done. Also, the Northern Star could certainly request a copy of that if they felt like publishing, but I don't know what other mechanism there might be for getting that document to the student body as a whole.

**E. Seaver:** And it would be an attachment to our minutes from APASC that are posted on the University Council website.

**T. Latham:** SPS Council doesn't have any direct representation on the UCC or the Grad Council directly, but we do have some concerns regarding the proposed grade change system, just three quick ones. We want to know how this would affect scholarship eligibility, as some of our employment categories operate these types of departments. Currently, a lot of the cutoffs are like a 3.0. You can still have a B- and have a 2.67, so that might change how individuals are eligible for scholarships. The second point would be if you are a grad student, a 3.0 is the cutoff for good standing or probation.

**A. Rosenbaum:** If I could just cut you off for a second, these are all issues that we have considered, and this will be discussed by the committee and input should be given to the committee in some way. So, this is not, I think, a matter for the University Council at this time.

**E. Seaver:** We already have a group of people who have been raising these questions already that need to have answers. So, we have a whole set of those same kinds of questions that the APASC and the faculty and the students have to get answers to that before they make a vote.

**S. Willis:** I just wanted to sort of give a little friendly shout out to the SA and suggest that this has been a very active discussion at the Faculty Senate for several months now and probably, the Senate agendas and minutes are on the web and that would probably be a good thing for you guys to be reading all the time so you're aware of these things before they show up in the Star. We actually don't operate in secret.

**A. Gupta:** I understand fully Austin's concern that how students would know and it would

sound like they would go to the Faculty Senate website. One possibility is that in the University main website, where students do not control, they are among all the other important things that are mentioned, maybe just have a separate tab or whatever it says, proposed grade change or grade change under consideration. That way, every student, when they go to the NIU website, they know what's going on, and also giving permission who they should contact.

**J. Peters:** Well, let me just say assessment is at the heart of what we do at universities. We were just talking about evaluating a president, an executive secretary, faculty get evaluated all the time, tenure process and students routinely, and there's nothing more important than a fair and understandable system of evaluation. I remember as a faculty member, the hardest thing I did, and I know faculty feel this way, is the evaluation of students, and you need everything in your toolkit to do a fair and accurate assessment because, in fact, the awarding of grades and the matter of grades, the judgment of the faculty member is final. But it puts faculty at the heart of the process and, therefore, it seems to me appropriate that from time to time, whether you need it or not, faculty talk about the process by which they evaluate and the standards and the scale or whatever, because it stimulates an awful lot of good discussion about evaluation and so I know I always felt as a faculty member, I wanted a system that gave me enough nuance so that I could make a distinction between a B- and a C+. So, I want to commend the Faculty. There are externalities that are associated with this, about how much does it cost, can the systems do it. And there are concerns that students have, will this disadvantage my current GPA as I go to apply to law school or so forth. I remember at one institution, the debates went on for three years, and they moved from a system like ours to one of pluses and minuses except no A+. Nobody is ever that good. I'm making light of this; this is a very serious matter and I'm really pleased and look forward to seeing the outcome.

**J. Bruce:** I was just going to say that if you're going to try and communicate to students, I know I am a student, I can speak for myself that I'm not going to be too keen to read through an entire length of six months of minutes from the Faculty Senate, that maybe just go to the Star or put it on the NIU webpage is just a brief summary of bullet points of what the key new things with the new proposed grading system is, just so students can actually understand what's potentially coming into place.

**E. Seaver:** I think Alan and I can talk about how we might be able to communicate and we need to drag Brad Bond into this discussion as well.

## **X. INFORMATION ITEMS**

- A. University Assessment Panel – December 3, 2010 [minutes](#)
- B. Committee on Initial Teacher Certification – November 12, 2010 [minutes](#)
- C. Committee on Advanced Professional Certification in Education – December 6, 2010 - [minutes](#)

## **XI. ADJOURNMENT**

Meeting adjourned at 4:37 p.m.