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UNIVERSITY COUNCIL MINUTES
Wednesday, December 5, 2012, 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 Agendas, Minutes & Transcripts.

VOTING MEMBERS PRESENT: Alden, Bak, Bender, Block, Bohn, Cappell (for Sagarin), Carpenter, Cho, Coles, Daniel (for Walker), Dawson, Downing, Duerkes, Entzminger, Farrell, Feurer, Fredericks, Gregolunas, Gupta, Haliczzer, Harris, Henning, Hofer, Holly, Houze, Kapitan, Kolb, Kowalski, Latham, Lee, LeFlore, Lopez, McCord, Middleton, Mirman, Mohabbat, Munroe, Peters, Plonczynski, Prock, Quick, Rosenbaum, Small, Smith, Sunderlin (for Bond), Theodore, Thu, Towell (for Schoenbachler), VandeCreek, Vohra

VOTING MEMBERS ABSENT: Bond, Guerrero, Lenczewski, Lin, Long, Naples, Neal, Rollman, Rosato, Sagarin, Schoenbachler, Von Ende, Walker (on sabbatical), Ward

OTHERS PRESENT: Armstrong, Birberick, Blakemore, Brady, Bryan, Echols, Freeman, Freedman, Klaper, Macdonald, Martin, Michael, Snow, Williams

OTHERS ABSENT: Cunningham, Kaplan, Prawitz, Slotsve, Waas

I. CALL TO ORDER

Meeting called to order at 3:09 p.m.

II. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

J. Peters: And our first order of business is the adoption of today's agenda and we have two walk-in items and then I am going to make a suggestion for re-ordering today's items.

We have a new item, VI. F. 1., which is the online evaluation of teaching effectiveness and we have an informational item walk-in, X. R. and that is Guidelines for Students Wishing to Resolve Various Complaints. That's an information item but it is a walk-in and it goes under X. R.

Under the President's Report, IV. A., I want to move up VII. Unfinished Business, which is the reconsideration of the council's vote to not veto the UCC's grading policy change.

Then, under VI. Reports from Councils, Boards and Standing Committees, I recommend that we move F., the Academic Policy Committee's report on online student evaluation, up to the first item under reports. So in that way we will have done our two action items and then we can go back and take reports.

D. Haliczzer: made the motion with the recommended additions and changes. **A. Quick:** was second.

The motion was approved without dissent or abstention.

III. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF THE NOVEMBER 7, 2012 UC MEETING
(distributed electronically)

J. Kowalski: made the motion. **R. Lopez:** was second.

The minutes were approved as written without dissent or abstention.

IV. PRESIDENT'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

J. Peters: Well, we have a busy agenda. Just let me say, like the rest of you, how elated and stunned I was to get the call at two o'clock on Sunday afternoon from our commissioner of the Mid-American Conference that we are going to the Orange Bowl! What a tremendous achievement for the young men of our football team. They are a tremendous group of young men who have strength of character and who are going to the Orange Bowl.

We are doing all we can to get students to the Orange Bowl. I'm trying to get every student who wants to go a seat on a bus and we're trying to get hotel rooms. I can tell you first-hand it's a bowl experience like no other. There are three or four bowls like that: Rose Bowl, Fiesta Bowl, Orange Bowl. Probably in the last 48 hours we have had more national publicity than we've had, maybe ever. We've had a spike in people interested in applying here.

I will say that just a couple of things about budget and veto session. We are now paid fully from what we were owed last year. At least, now we haven't received anything for this year, but we are paid up for last year. So all the \$12 million so that's good. We have not received our payment from MAP, the \$10 million. From the point of view from faculty and staff and annuitants, we are still not sure whether they will deal with pensions in the lame duck session or not. We'll be watching that during the winter break. We'll be watching that very, very closely.

We do have some business to attend to and that is Doris Macdonald is here, who is head of our coordinating committee for our Higher Learning Commission Self-Study, leading to our ten-year accreditation. We are accredited and given the Good Housekeeping stamp of approval every ten years. That certifies that we can operate as a university and that our degrees mean something and our programs are accredited. This is a big deal and it's a very serious thing and it takes us a couple years to prepare. We have about 100 people involved in preparing the information so I'm going to turn it over to Doris Macdonald who is doing a great job of coordinating.

A. HLC Self-Study Process – [presentation](#)
Doris Macdonald, HLC Accreditation Steering Committee Chair

Doris Macdonald's presentation can be accessed by clicking on "presentation," above. The full text of her presentation can be found in the University Council [transcript](#).

J. Peters: This is an extremely important endeavor. I want to thank you and your committee again.

D. Macdonald: Thank you very much. We have a lot of support from a lot of people on campus.

J. Peters: Now, as I indicated last time we were going to make a feature of the President's Announcements until a successor is chosen for me by the Board of Trustees. We're going to have a report from Alan who sits on the search committee and our general counsel is here, Jerry Blakemore, who can answer technical questions. And I know that there is an important meeting of the board and the search committee tomorrow to affirm a job description, but I'm not really involved in the process so that's why I am going to turn it over to Alan to give you an update.

A. Rosenbaum: The Board of Trustees held a special meeting last month and at that special meeting they authorized the search committee and also the search firm was approved. The search committee met immediately after that and began working on the position profile for the new president. It's a combination of what characteristics we want in a president and what we are identifying as the job description. That process was rather lengthy and included input from all of the different constituent groups in the university. That process will continue until tomorrow, which is the deadline we have set for developing the profile and the job description so that we can begin advertising the position and so that our search firm can begin soliciting applicants. That meeting will take place between noon and 1 p.m. with the search advisory committee by itself and then we'll be joined by the members of the Board of Trustees and between the search advisory committee and the Board of Trustees, we will hopefully hammer out the job description. The deadline for receipt of applications I believe is February 15.

J. Peters: From what I hear, it's moving along quite nicely and they've got a good committee and the board is engaged.

B. Student [appeal](#) of the University Council's declination to veto the Undergraduate Coordinating Council's grading policy change – Pages 13-15

J. Peters: We are moving to Unfinished Business and that is student appeal of the University Council's declination to veto the Undergraduate Coordinating Council's grading policy change and that's on page 13-15.

The grading policy change (plus/minus grades) came to the University Council a couple of meetings ago as an information item from the Undergraduate Coordinating Council and the University Council has six weeks to act or not act on that issue or it becomes policy. The first action was to send it back to the UCC to consider student input. They reaffirmed their decision to put in place the plus/minus grading system and then it came back and there was a motion made to veto it which would require a two-thirds majority. That vote was taken and it failed to meet the two-thirds requirement.

Then on November 16, I received a petition appealing the decision under Article 3, Section 3.5 of our bylaws which indicates that, if there is a petition signed by a certain percent of the constituent group, they can seek a reconsideration of any action taken by the University Council within a period of time. I've not experienced that in 13 years. So, I did what any president does, I have a

good lawyer and I asked Jerry Blakemore and I think Greg Brady handled it and they gave me an opinion because I didn't know how to proceed. Is a failure to veto an action or a non-action? It's the opinion of the Office of the General Counsel that pursuant to bylaw 3.5, the president must place this appeal on the agenda of the next regular meeting, that's today. What that means is it's placed on the agenda as a motion ready to be reconsidered. Does everyone understand that or want to challenge any of those interpretations?

K. Thu: So what's the sufficient number of votes needed for reconsideration.

J. Peters: It's an action that is as if it were moved and seconded as a veto vote. So it's the same vote as we had last time.

K. Thu: So it would be two-thirds?

J. Peters: Two-thirds, right. So actually we're not voting to determine whether we should reconsider, we're actually reconsidering and so we're into discussion and a vote. Now, let me say that it's on the floor, it doesn't need a second. We have a lot of students with us today, but we also have members of the UCC who have been party to this and I've asked them and Alan has asked them to kind of just go through the process by which we got there and I think Professor Snow is going to do that.

C. Snow: I am the faculty chair of the Undergraduate Coordinating Council. What I'm basically going to go over is how the student participation was solicited during the whole process. Student input was solicited in five different ways that we've identified through this process.

There is student representation on APASC which was the original committee that debated the plus/minus system. There are places for three student representatives on this committee. On the Undergraduate Coordinating Council there are six student representatives.

Number two, the NIU Student Association and the college student advisory councils were asked for input via a March 11, 2011 memo from David Wade, the chair of APASC at the time, and Gip Seaver the vice provost, asking for feedback. This memo was sent to the NIU Student Association, the college student advisory councils, college advising offices, and the college curricular deans. This memo presented the four different graded plans and it concluded with the statement that APASC is again requesting the input from the Student Association, all college student advisory committees, advising deans, and all college curriculum committees regarding grading options. It is the intention to review all of the input prior to making a decision.

The NIU Student Association submitted findings from a survey indicating a preference to not adopt the plus or minus grading system. Their cited concerns were the inclusion of a C minus, the repeat policy, and non-mandatory participation by faculty.

Number four, the student advisory representatives on APASC at the April 13, 2011 meeting, indicated a plan to start a petition for a plus only system. That petition never materialized.

Lastly, number five, all feedback including student feedback was shared with relevant groups and this policy that was voted upon – the currently recommended plus/minus policy – reflects the

compromise in response to concerns about the C minus grade regarding the C or better language in the catalog, limited admission programs, etc. The repeat policy and capping the GPA at a 4.0, which led us to drop the A+ from this current plan, were made in response to concerns raised by both faculty and students and so this current grading policy is a compromise position.

A. Birberick: I'm vice provost and I'm co-chair with Cason on the University Coordinating Council. I want to say that I have no investment one way or the other in how this policy decision goes. I had opportunity for input when I was a faculty member. I was polled like other faculty members in my department and I contributed my input at that time. But as vice provost I have no position.

I do want to speak to the issue about whether the UCC really gave serious consideration or not about reaffirming our original decision and we did. We had Alan Rosenbaum and Mike Theodore join us, they both spoke about it. They had the opportunity to listen to one another, respond to one another if need be, and then we had a good discussion afterwards. One of the student representatives was present at that meeting and also had input into that conversation. We did consider all the ways in which the students' voice was listened to and the fact that you were looking at a compromised grading policy, one that is customized in response to both student and faculty input. I think that's very important to emphasize. I have to say, in my professional life, I've never quite seen a grading policy look like this before and the reason for that is because student and faculty input were taken into consideration. At many points, they dovetailed with one another. So we looked at all of that and we did give that very, very serious consideration. One final thing to point out, and I think this is really important, that shared governance worked in this case. You see that in the compromised policy but all too often there's a misunderstanding and that having a voice and having input is not quite the same as getting exactly what you want. If I can put my old faculty hat on once again, as I said, I had input as a faculty member and I can assure you as a faculty member when I look at this grading policy that's now before everyone, it wasn't exactly what I wanted, but I do respect the process.

J. Peters: All right now, let's move into discussion of council voting members only. Does anyone like to speak positive or negative to the measure?

A. Quick: Thank you, Mr. President, members of the University Council. I first want to thank the president for his leadership in this issue and also, Mr. President, to assure you that I saw firsthand the number of students that helped to get the thousand plus signatures and I can assure you that they worked very hard and those are valid signatures. I'm going to let, in a second here, my colleague speak, but one thing I wanted to speak to is a comment that was just made by a UC member in the fact that shared governance and you don't always get what you want. One of things that strikes me is, yes, we can say shared governance, we say it a lot and everyone has a seat at the table, but when the table is slanted towards one direction or the other and you have, I think three was the total members of students on a board of I don't remember the number to actual members of that committee, it isn't fair. Just like in here, we can say that the operating staff and they have a voice here, but the one or two votes they have compared to the 30-something or 40-something other people, they really don't have an opportunity to vote a certain way. I think that is something we need to look at and when we've heard this discussion obviously this issue came up multiple times this year and previous years, it always comes back to well we talked to this faculty, all the departments went back and polled the staff to see what they wanted,

to talk to the faculty to see what they want. No one did that with all the students. We did it with the two or three students that were on that committee and I do remember the memo that came in April and we sent back that we still had issues with it, so yes they asked our governing body, but we did not go back and poll all students like they requested.

J. Peters: Okay, I am going to be fair on the balance of time, so if I rotate back and forth, I don't want to disrupt your presentation but I want to be fair on both sides.

N. Bender: Nicholas Bender, director of government affairs for the NIU Student Association, I have one quick question for you, sir, before I continue. The memo that was sent on the plus/minus grading system to the student advisory college at the College of Business, can you give me a date on when that was sent to them? I sat on the College of Business advisory council for the last two years and I can't remember when that was brought up.

C. Snow: All the memos went at the same time. The date on the memo was March 7, 2011 [but it was sent out on March 11, 2011].

N. Bender: Good afternoon everyone. I'm coming here before you today in regards to the plus/minus grading policy being implemented. As representative of the 2000 plus students, who have signed the petition that is responsible for bringing the plus/minus grading policy topic back to University Council, I'd like to say thank you, President Peters, for giving the students a chance to speak again on this subject and thank you everyone here on University Council for your patience on this matter. I respectfully ask this council to approach this subject with an open mind setting all pre-suppositions aside for the sake of impartiality.

UCC said there was adequate student input taken into consideration. However, a large amount of students I have personally talked to about this new policy were entirely unaware of the plus/minus policy and/or its implementation. If they are not aware that it is being implemented, then I would be willing to say that their input was not adequately taken into consideration. That is not to say that they would in any way that they would sway a decision or that they would change the grading system. But it to say but not only were they not part of the decision, they were not aware of a decision actually being made.

We have a very intelligent student body and an even more intelligent student government body and I think it would be a wise decision to have students' input taken into consideration. I feel that I should mention the students that are here understand that this is not a game and action must be taken whether it is for or against the plus or minus policy. We are not here to delay, debunk or destroy the policy. I am unaware of how many voting members there are here today, but we need 40 votes to veto this action. The last time the vote was 24 for veto and 22 against veto, two no votes, leaving us with approximately 16 votes to sway to the veto side. Seventy five percent of the no veto vote. This university prides itself on being student centered and our constitution says that every action will take student opinions into consideration. I'm paraphrasing that majorly. I say you give the students a chance. We are reasonable people. We are professional as they come in college student form. Let the students talk and deliberate and set up committees. Let the students go to council meetings and hear what they have to say on this matter. We have one semester left before the student government body changes hands. And I say that because I can only speak about the student government body that I currently know. We are trying to do the

right thing. I propose that we veto the plus/minus policy with intention of having student input in conjunction with the Student Association taken into consideration a far greater number than was previously done.

D. Plonczynski: I'd like to pose a question as well a point of clarification. The Student Association our professional members here have made a really strong argument that there was, in their opinion, inadequate representation and it seems that part of the argument was that there was a disconnect between the membership on those committees and the Student Association. I'd like clarification on APASC and on UCC, that three members and six members, were those actually members of the Student Association?

A. Birberick: The student committee members that sit on APASC and on the UCC are selected through the colleges. It is entirely possible that those students who are selected are also members of the Student Association. It should be pointed out that those two committees are academic committees and they are involved with curricular matters. So the current process we have for selecting the students, as well as selecting the faculty, runs through individual colleges and representation through colleges. I would put to the Student Association, if they feel that their representation is inadequate or they would like to have more representation or to be insured of having students who actually represent the Student Association, sit on those committees, that they take the appropriate steps to change the guidelines for how student representation is currently determined.

D. Plonczynski: Just to make sure I understand, there's no requirement for a student who sits on those committees to report to the Student Association?

A. Birberick: No, there is no requirement for that.

D. Plonczynski: So at the college level or at the committee level, there's no requirement?

A. Birberick: Right, exactly and so when APASC was seeking input on the various policies, grade policies that were being considered, that's one of the reasons why they specifically reached out to the Student Association and then they also reached out to the student advisory councils.

M. Theodore: Michael Theodore, Student Association. I understand the argument that it was a compromise and that it came from our concerns. I do remember back in 2011 when those concerns came up. I have here the original memo with the four options. We were directly reached as well as several other bodies what our perspectives were and at the time, due to the feeling we had from our constituencies and the many concerns students had about the plus/minus system, we listed just several complaints and several worries that we had and that was good. That was the process of shared governance in action. But the thing is, the compromise then happened and was approved and went right through and we weren't aware that the compromise actually happened. So while we did send back concerns, we weren't actively involved with a compromise. I do understand that we do have a unique system here where it's not a full plus/minus system. Students may have been involved with that process and were involved with that process on the committee, but we weren't actively involved with this and most of the constituencies that we represent weren't involved with this and this a big surprise to all the student body when we realize that a compromise has been made and the policy has been approved. From what I see, this

policy it goes through a lot of work, it goes through a lot of debate, it goes through a lot of talking to make sure it's done right, and then we come to the compromise choice and then it goes right to policy and its packaged and its ready to go. That really, when it comes down to it, is our concern.

W. Duerkes: Wayne Duerkes, student advisory council for the College of Liberal Arts and Science and I would like a little clarification. I've been hearing a lot of discussion about the design of this new grading system. The one thing that has been brought up to me by most of the students that I talk to is that component of what happens to the students that are presently here and how do they transition in with this new system? Has that component of that entire design been addressed in your council? Because I think maybe some of the lack of communication that students are concerned with maybe doesn't necessarily deal with the design of the program, but how is it going to affect them during this transition period because that seems to be the thing that I'm getting the most e-mails and texts and talked about so may I ask, has that component of this design been discussed?

A. Birberick: No, not at this point but if this policy goes through, that would be the next step. That would be the operational aspect of it and that would involve a conversation with various constituents about how it would be best implemented and operationalized and surely everyone has in the forefront of their thinking, the fact that we wouldn't want to do any harm. So there would be conversations about, you know, we'd carefully go through the catalog, figure out where there are sticking points and we would work to resolve them. But at this point, that conversation hasn't happened because we don't know what the system is going to look like. But, should the plus/minus grading policy go through, then that would be, again, a moment for a conversation with college offices, with student representatives, APASC would have to look at various grading models and there's precedence for this at other universities.

W. Duerkes: And I appreciate that you know categorizing that as operational shall we say, but obviously by not vetoing this, the students I talked to are concerned about going forward with such an open-ended type of thing. How is this going to turn out? There's just thousands of students that are concerned about what will it translate to after those conversations are done.

A. Birberick: And I appreciate that thought and I empathize with all the anxiety that the students would be experiencing. I can say that it's not just the students who are anxious, in terms of programs and things like that. I will also say that a lot of this anxiety went away, or the things that were making people anxious, went away when we stopped at the C grade because that took care of a lot of elements that were issues in terms of limited admissions, terms of grades for programs, in terms of repeat policies. So we got rid of a lot of those things with this customized grading policy.

Z. Bohn: Bohn, Operating Staff Council. I have the great privilege of sitting amongst this council as both operating staff and as a student of this university and I simply would like to pose a question. Through all the discussion I've heard multiple things about this new grading process that could be detrimental to a student whether it be effecting their GPA negatively, scholarship implementations, core requirements, things like that and I've yet to hear a single advantageous outcome that could come of this system. I would like to pose a question either to the UCC council members or simply an open forum: What are the advantages of this new grading system?

C. Cappell: I'm Charles Cappell of sociology and I was chair of the Academic Affairs Committee that drafted the original plus/minus grading system proposal and was part of the negotiating team with APASC to reach a compromise and Steve Martin. I'm allowed to vote today, I'm substituting as an alternate for Brad Sagarin and my colleague, Steve Martin from the Physics Department, was a very active member and co-drafted the proposal with me.

In brief, the plus/minus system kind of modernizes our university. It makes us comparable to Ball State, Western Illinois, most of the MAC schools, the Big Ten schools, which all have plus/minus systems. The primary point is: If you look at grade distributions across universities of our rank, you find roughly about 70 percent of the students receive a grade of A or B. That means professors right now have the freedom to classify 70 percent of our students into two categories. Those of us that teach feel that we're capable, and that students will benefit from, a more refined system that rewards higher performances in each of the grade levels which have a fairly large range and can incentivize the system perhaps a little bit. The ultimate result of this from the surveys we've done of universities basically shows no appreciable change in the average grade point average of students when the universities have transformed from a pure letter grade to a plus/minus system. We've done our homework on this issue.

S. Martin: Thank you. So, also to address this issue of what does it do for us. I was sort of flabbergasted when I was hired by this university to find out that I could not distinguish in grading between a student who gets an 89 in my class and a student who gets an 80. I have to give them both Bs according to the extremely course-grained policy that we now have in place. So it's an issue of accurate representation of student performance. That's a very meaningful difference in student performance in class when you have a student who has an 80 and a student who has an 89, and we ought to be able to distinguish that.

There is also the issue of fairness. If you are designing a grading system, in a large class in particular, and you have a student who has an 80 and you have a student who has a 79.5 and you have to put the dividing line somewhere. So the student who has the 79.5 perhaps is going to get a C and the one who has the 80 is going to get a B. We really have to do better. A more fine-grained system is really necessary.

Just to put a little bit more detail, we did consult the registrars at Western Illinois who transitioned in 2010 and at Ball State, they transitioned in 1996. Again, there's only one other MAC school that does not have plus/minus grading. They both said they did not see a significant change in student GPA. At Western Illinois, they actually said the number of grade appeals which was another concern, the number of formal grade appeals actually decreased after the change.

We did consider a plus only system, but I think there's value in having a system that many other universities use. Although, some universities do use a plus only system, they are a small minority. Also, addressing the fact that this is a compromise system. It's a compromise, but it's not an outlier system. The main difference between this and what's at place in many other universities, is that we don't have the C minus. And the reasons for that are well documented as far as the compromise and the special situation we have in Illinois with the teacher certification

requiring a C.

I guess the last thing I'd like to say is this proposal of plus/minus grading, a lot of times people view this with some fear that I think is not justified. This is not some system that has unknowable consequences, some reckless experiment. This is the system that most universities, including most universities in the Big Ten, most universities in the MAC, throughout this country, use. It's not something we should be scared of. There was a comment when I was talking to the registrar at Western Illinois, that once they implemented the system, they found that a lot of the things people were very worried about, didn't happen. That it actually worked out relatively smoothly.

D. LeFlore: So for the most part of it, it's to be like other institutions to follow that particular grading scale is what I'm hearing is the reason why the institution wants to move in that direction. I think that's the wrong idea to have just to follow that trend of other places. We can say that following the trend to legalize concealed weapons in other states, how they're doing that and we're fighting against the idea of doing it here in Illinois. We shouldn't do things just because other places are doing it. That's why the Student Association and the students are here to basically say: Can we re-evaluate this plus/minus system and come up with ways to try to figure out, I guess the students are more so not knowledgeable of the plus/minus system and how it's really going to effect this institution. What benefits besides catching up to the other MACs and the Big Tens as far as having the same grading scale? How is this going to benefit the students? How is this going to hurt the students and actually explain to the students how will this system get implemented?

As students, it's hard for us to feel comfortable in voting for something and accepting something such as this when we don't have an outlined plan of how this system would happen. We always talked about, when we brought up the plus and minus system that professors have the freedom to use whatever grading scale they want in their classrooms and that we, as students, shouldn't infringe upon their right and I think that, as students, we're not trying to come against their right as professors to use whatever grading scale they want, because I have a professor right now who uses the plus and minus system in the class, but when it gets implemented by NIU it's only A, B, C, D. What we're asking here today is for us to come back to the table and work with the UCC, the Student Association is to work with the UCC on acknowledging us about the plus and minus system and how this is going to impact the students.

J. Kowalski: As I have been following this issue for several years now and we've reached this point, there's several things that occurred to me that in part they are a series of questions. And the first of the of these was: What would be the upshot of a University Council decision to veto a decision made by the UCC because, at this point, a great deal of effort and research has been expended doing the kind of comparative research on the different types of plus/minus grading systems that are in use at other universities. As Charles mentioned, generally speaking, they've demonstrated no, or extremely minimal, impact on student GPAs at the institutions that have tried it.

Another question that I wanted to find out more about or have answered is: What is the goal of the Student Association? Is it to have the entire issue completely reinvestigated, re-researched, which in fact scotches most of the effort that's been put into it thus far. Or is it to provide adequate time for a kind of final hearing from the Student Association based on some research

done or further student input at which point another vote might be taken by the UCC?

And another question that occurs to me is: What kind of signal do some of the members of the University Council send, not only the students, because obviously students have felt that their voices have not been given adequate consideration in some of this process, but also, what sort of signal do some members of the University Council feel they might be sending to members of this body, such as members of the Academic Policy Committee, or members of the UCC who have spent a great deal of time-consuming and careful work and given careful consideration to some of the issues that we're considering here today too. It's a complicated problem.

A. Quick: I can understand the discussion from the faculty side of things in looking at this and to answer a couple of your questions as we've stated multiple times, what we're asking for is more time. We are not taking a stand either for or against plus or minus. We are asking for more student input. We hear a lot about facts and information that's been gathered by UCC and APASC regarding other schools in the Big Ten and the MAC, but we don't hear from the people that are to be affected by this at our university which are the students. That's what we are asking for. We're asking for more time, more information. Let's educate students so then if we do see, if these facts are correct, and I assume they are, but the students hear that these things actually are not detrimental that they will be beneficial to them, then you'll have a student body that's in support of this and it's not a contentious battle. That's what we're asking for.

As you can tell today, we have a number of students who have taken time out of their day, which is sometimes difficult, to come here, to show their support for more time for education to have an actual voice. In this council, we've seen through the last vote in this meeting, that we have a great number of students here. We have I think 17 roughly on the University Council. It is not the majority, nor should it be, but we're one group and we're representing the 20-some thousand students that are not here today and I think it is for the betterment, not only of this council, but of the university, to show that, you know what, we hear our students. And yes, I understand and I appreciate the hard work of UCC and APASC and I don't in any way undermine the work they've done. It doesn't say anything bad to them because I don't question the data. What I'm asking for and what we're here today is to say: We'd like more input. I think it shows UCC and APASC that, yes, University Council appreciates the work you've done, but we do feel it's important to get more student input from the people that are going to be affected by that. I honestly, I agree with Delonte. I don't care what other schools do. This is about the 20-some thousand students that decided to come to Northern Illinois University and how it affects them. Again, this is not a for or against the policy, it's strictly more time, more input from the constituents that it affects.

J. Kowalski: One thing I'd like to say with regard to the question of more time being needed. There needs to be some sort of method by which we determine how much more time we're talking about then because this needs to be an issue that cannot go back through years and years of reinvestigation or else the hard work that's been done by these committees is being negated. It needs to be something, I would suggest, that comes back after due process and presentations and is again acted on by the UCC, preferably by sometime during the next semester.

J. Peters: Let me break in here, I think we've got a technical problem. By the way, this has been the best university substantive debate that I've witnessed in 13 years. It warms my heart, but if I

were sitting on the UCC and this was vetoed, I wouldn't be particularly pleased to take this issue up. So I don't see where there is, given the rules, if it's vetoed, there is no pathway for reconsideration, unless someone comes up with some compromise that this council doesn't control because then it's in the academic setting. I don't think there's a pathway to it, but maybe someone smarter than I can come up with a pathway.

J. Kowalski: I'm not going to propose a pathway but that's why I opened with my basic question: What is the upshot of this veto? And the one other thing I'd like to go back to for just a moment is that I don't believe that the major reason that this system was being considered was so that we could simply keep up with our neighbors or keep up with the academic Jones' so to speak. It's because of the argument that, if you have discrepancies that can go from let's say 80 to 89.5 percent in a particular grade level, that it gives students recognition that their grades are being assessed with a more careful and considered and more accurate discrimination and I think that's the main reason why the system is preferable as opposed to the straight A, B, C, D, F system. It's not just because other universities do it.

A. Rosenbaum: I'd like to call the question.

J. Peters: We're on a vote to call the question which is not debatable and requires a simple majority. Correct?

A. Rosenbaum: The parliamentarian says it doesn't require a second.

J. Peters: Does everyone understand, we're calling the question? We're voting on calling the question which a yes vote means, call the question means we'll go to a vote without further debate. No means we continue the debate.

A. Gupta: I'll just request the motion being displayed on the monitor I guess it was so that we are not confused what we are voting for.

A. Rosenbaum: We'll display the actual motion as soon as we decide whether to call the question or not. So the vote is to call the question. If we call the question, we'll put the motion up.

The vote to call the question was approved as follows:

34 – YES
14 – NO
0 – ABSTAIN

J. Peters: The motion to end discussion passed. Now we move to a vote on the main motion which is the reconsideration of the veto.

The text of the motion was posted on the screen.

The vote on whether to veto the UCC grading policy was as follows:

First Vote:

28 – YES – VETO

21 – NO – NO VETO

0 – ABSTAIN

J. Peters: All right, so the veto measure fails.

R. Holly: The actual voting somebody made a comment that people were voting and it was too early and several people then got a clear screen and tried to vote again and then nothing happened. We need somebody to make it very clear to start voting.

J. Peters: Yea, that's what I was trying to do. The parliamentarian given that there's a challenge to the vote, should we re-vote? We don't know how many people are here, but 49 people voted. Should we re-vote? Now, everybody hands off the clicker, number one. This is like my grandchildren. Everybody leave the controller alone. Only grandpa can do this. We are ready.

A second vote was taken on the same question. The vote was:

Second Vote:

28 – YES – VETO

22 – NO – NO VETO

0 – ABSTAIN

J. Peters: We have a vote. Let me do a point of privilege as president 13 years that was a great discussion. I have three views; one as a faculty member, one as a student and one as president.

As a faculty member, I argued this in 1983 before the Faculty Senate or the Academic Senate at the University of Nebraska and we had a plus system but not a minus system which was not a good system. And the argument that I made at the time, on behalf of the committee, because you have to represent a committee. You might now always agree with everything a committee does, but the argument went like this. The most important thing that faculty do is the evaluation of students and performance in a class and that's a decided faculty issue. It is an integrity issue and it is difficult because in the awarding of grades, the judgment of a professor is final. But that evaluation is key to a university. Then the argument goes, that professor needs whatever tools they have to make that job doable and valid and easier. At the time, the argument was that just the plus system did not have enough gradients and I think Professor Martin was arguing this point, to make that distinction. So they added minuses.

The other view that I see here is a disconnect in a perception of what our participation system of students on these various committees is. Over a long number of years here, we've developed an elaborate shared governance system where the academic committees are populated by students who are within colleges, our academic departments, just as faculty on those academic committees are within departments and don't necessarily represent the Faculty Senate. They are academic college representatives. So then we have issue where students come up and the student feels their

voice wasn't heard and I guess that's kind of the real issue here. I don't even think it's the issue of plus or minus grading system. I don't think that student input or student centeredness means that if 51 percent of the students say we should have a plus/minus system we should have it. I don't think that's the issue here. My suggestion is that students and us get together and work on a better, a more rationalized student input system.

And the other thing, historically, student input on committees has varied depending on the generation of students. This generation happens to get it. You participate, where previously, you know students don't show up or whatever. Then the other thing I ask is that when we implement this policy, I want you to hear the voice of students in the implementation.

A. Birberick: Agreed.

J. Peters: I'm asking as a favor as president for 13 years going. Let's move on.

V. CONSENT AGENDA

VI. REPORTS FROM COUNCILS, BOARDS AND STANDING COMMITTEES

F. Academic Policy Committee – Sean Farrell, Chair – report

1. Online student evaluation of instruction – [walk-in](#)

J. Peters: Now reports from Councils, Boards and Standing Committees. We're moving the Academic Policy Committee action item on online course evaluation to the top and Sean Farrell the chair of the APC is here.

S. Farrell: And I thought everybody was here to hear about the evaluations but apparently that's only my ego speaking. Thanks everybody who is here. The Academic Policy Committee's main issue that we've taken up here has to do with the issue of student evaluations of instruction.

The big issue here has to do with online versus paper evaluations in class. Briefly, several years ago, the UC passed a policy that allowed for the use of online evaluations. More recently one college began to require online evaluations. Some faculty complained about that and the matter was taken up by the Faculty Senate. Charles Cappell, headed up a committee of the Faculty Senate and did an exhaustive, high quality study of the issue that found that the faculty concerns about online evaluations were merited. That, in fact, they had smaller sample sizes and that they tended to skew negative and this can have implications for both tenure and merit. The Faculty Senate, on the basis of this, had a wide ranging discussion and proposed some language to essentially ensure that the faculty of a department had input into what evaluation system would be selected. That was then kicked up to the UC and several questions were asked about some of the ambiguous nature of the language that was in that two-sentence memo. It thus came to our committee. We met on November 6 to take up the issue and although there were significant differences as to the value and the use of online evaluations, there was consensus that we needed to perhaps tighten up the language. In wordsmithing the sentence that you see before you on the second page, the flip side of your report, I was very much guided by one of my committee member's notions that, if we legislate, we should legislate minimally because of the moving

target of both technology and evaluative mechanisms. We changed it from the two-sentence language that came out of the Faculty Senate to one sentence that reads, “The decision to use online or paper evaluation forms will be made at the department program level.” I think that reflects the spirit that faculty at the department level will have an input into the system of evaluation.

J. Peters: So that’s what we’re voting on?

S. Farrell: That’s what we want to discuss, for discussion and then hopefully a vote.

S. Farrell: Made the motion. **C. McCord:** was second.

J. Kowalski: I applaud and appreciate the effort that’s gone into streamlining the language of this. However, based on the considerations that were given to this issue earlier, the one thing that I would like to suggest and offer as a friendly amendment to this language is that the italicized line in the new form be amended to read, “The decision to use online or paper evaluation forms will be determined by the faculty at the department/program level.” That’s offered as a friendly amendment and my rationale is that I feel that we need to make sure that it’s understood that it is a faculty decision. And in my opinion, although I am sure the effort to streamline was being made in good faith, that this is a somewhat ambiguous wording and I would prefer to see it made very clear that the faculty determine whether or not online or paper forms will be used particularly given the statements that these skew negative when they’re online and fewer students actually participate.

There was extensive discussion during which several friendly amendments were made and accepted. The final wording was:

Each department/program, with approval by faculty vote and appropriate student input, shall adopt a paper or electronic form for the student evaluation of instruction which shall be filed with the college council. The decision to use online or paper evaluation forms will be determined by faculty vote at the department/program level. The college council, with the participation of the college student advisory committee, may suggest a standard evaluation form for the entire college. Different forms may be established for graduate and undergraduate courses or in accordance with the special circumstances mentioned in Section 1 (Courses to be Evaluated) above.

The vote was as follows:

32 – YES

7 – NO

0 – ABSTAIN

The motion passed.

J. Peters: Now, we can go one of two ways: It’s almost five o’clock, we can trundle on, it’s basically reports. Or we can adjourn and carry over reports to the first meeting of the new academic year. What is your pleasure?

The body voted to adjourn. Written reports are included in the agenda and at the next meeting we will entertain any questions on these reports.

- A. FAC to IBHE – Sonya Armstrong – [report](#) – Pages 3-4
- B. BOT Academic Affairs, Student Affairs and Personnel Committee – Kerry Freedman and Andy Small – [report](#) – Pages 5-6
- C. BOT Finance, Facilities and Operations Committee – Alan Rosenbaum and Greg Waas – [report](#) – Pages 7-8
- D. BOT Legislation, Audit, and External Affairs Committee – Todd Latham and Rosita Lopez – [report](#) – Page
- E. BOT – Alan Rosenbaum – [report](#) – Page 10
- G. Resources, Space and Budgets Committee – Paul Carpenter, Chair – [report](#) – Page 11
- H. Rules and Governance Committee – Melissa Lenczewski, Chair – no report
- I. University Affairs Committee – Kathleen Coles, Chair – no report
- J. Student Association – Delonte LeFlore, President, and Austin Quick, Speaker – report
- K. Operating Staff Council – Andy Small, President – no report
- L. Supportive Professional Staff Council – Todd Latham, President – [report](#) – Page 12
- M. Elections and Legislative Oversight Committee – Abhijit Gupta, Chair – no report

VII. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

VIII. NEW BUSINESS

IX. COMMENTS AND QUESTIONS FROM THE FLOOR

X. INFORMATION ITEMS

- A. [Minutes](#), Academic Planning Council
- B. [Minutes](#), Admissions Policies and Academic Standards Committee
- C. [Minutes](#), Athletic Board
- D. [Minutes](#), Campus Security and Environmental Quality Committee
- E. [Minutes](#), Committee on Advanced Professional Certification in Education
- F. [Minutes](#), Committee on the Improvement of Undergraduate Education
- G. [Minutes](#), Committee on Initial Teacher Certification
- H. [Minutes](#), Committee on the Undergraduate Academic Experience
- I. [Minutes](#), Committee on the Undergraduate Curriculum

- J. [Minutes](#), General Education Committee
- K. [Minutes](#), Graduate Council
- L. [Minutes](#), Honors Committee
- M. [Minutes](#), Operating Staff Council
- N. [Minutes](#), Supportive Professional Staff Council
- O. [Minutes](#), Undergraduate Coordinating Council
- P. [Minutes](#), University Assessment Panel
- Q. [Minutes](#), University Benefits Committee
- R. [A Guide](#) to University Resources for Students Wishing to Resolve Various Complaints

XI. ADJOURNMENT

J. Peters: We're adjourned. See you at the Orange Bowl.

Meeting adjourned at 4:50 p.m.