I. Approval of the minutes

The minutes of the November 5th meeting were approved as written.

II. College response to the Academic Programs Assessment task force report

Senator Dunn had requested that this item be added to the original agenda. She read the task force report over the weekend and had two major problems with it. The first point is that the time frame is completely unrealistic for doing a top to bottom review of programs that is equivalent to a seven year program review. She also argued that faculty should not be expected to spend time collecting, organizing, and formatting data that the administration already has. This is not an efficient use of faculty time. She sent an email to the other senators earlier that morning spelling out her concerns. She feels that it is important that the senate prepare a response to the task force.

Chair Juby said that she had been contacted by the chair of the College of Humanities and Fine Arts Senate who suggested that the different college senates meet to try to coordinate a response. She also presented some responses from people in her own department (Social Work). One objection is to the use of data from student evaluations of teaching (Section III.1). Members of her faculty pointed out that the use of historical and aggregated data means that department averages can be pulled down by just one bad instructor, even if that instructor has left the institution. Furthermore, student assessments of teaching are not supposed to be used for this purpose. She quoted the instruction sheet that is read before the assessments are given which states their intended uses. It is not appropriate for them to be used in ways other than those listed in that document.

Senator Lynch said that she had asked for feedback from the people who head up the different programs in her department. The general response was that the time frame was completely unrealistic for a project of this magnitude, particularly if the faculty are responsible for collecting and organizing all this information. People don’t understand why this must be done so quickly, and the task force needs to justify the February 15th deadline. She also questioned why only undergraduate programs were being included in the review. This type of broad institutional review of all programs should also include graduate programs.

Dean Johnson said that it was his understanding that Sue Joseph did provide the task force with some input on graduate programs and there was some initial discussion of including both graduate and undergraduate programs. Due to time constraints, however, they decided to focus solely on undergraduate programs. Senator Lynch said that this is further evidence that the whole process needs to be slowed down so that it can be done properly. Dean Johnson said that
he believes that the task force would be open to reasonable, cogent arguments for changing the process, but we may not be successful.

Senator Yu asked why this has to be done so quickly. Dean Johnson said that the president and provost seem determined to present this as fait accompli to the incoming provost and other new administrators, but that he himself does not understand their reasoning. He noted that the first part of the spring semester, when this process would be occurring, is an extremely busy time in terms of reviewing tenure and promotion, that we have two departments that are currently or will soon be undergoing their seven year program reviews, and furthermore several departments will be in the middle of moving due to the renovation of Sabin.

Senator Lynch commented that faculty in her department were not necessarily opposed to the project when it was first announced, but they had assumed that they would be able to draw on previous seven-year academic program reviews and similar sources. People are appalled by the amount of new data that they are expected to collect and analyze. She also questioned why graduate programs are not being included in the analysis.

Dean Johnson encouraged people to read a recent article in the Des Moines Register which referred to the process as the “pruning” of programs. Senator Dunn asked whether it is the case that tenure does not protect faculty from termination when whole programs or departments are being eliminated. Dean Johnson said that he does not believe that is the intent in this case. He would expect that faculty might be reassigned, but not laid-off. He noted that AAUP principles do allow the termination of faculty in circumstances of “financial exigency” but that UNI has always tried to avoid that. Senator Lynch said that she remembered previous discussions to the effect that UNI practices “tenure to the institution” rather than “tenure to the department,” but she was not sure if that was interpretation or official policy.

Dean Johnson said that although he understands Senator Dunn’s contention that the administration should take responsibility for supplying the data in the correct format, there are potential problems if the data are wrong or require contextualization. Formatting the data ourselves avoids those problems. He does believe that the Office of Institutional Research will be able to aid the faculty in supplying some of the data. Senator Dunn pointed out that even if the raw data are available, they may not be supplied in the format required for the report and may require extensive recalculation, formatting, etc.

Senator Brown asked about the composition of the second task force. Dean Johnson said that his understanding is that the provost will create separate task forces for each college comprised primarily of people from outside the college but with one representative from within the college. These task forces will be comprised entirely of faculty, not administrators.

Senator Dunn volunteered to write up her initial email comments more formally as the first draft of the senate’s official response to the task force. She will then send that draft to the other senators for their input. She will then further revise the document and send it to task force by the November 28 deadline.
Dean Johnson reminded everyone that the first task force will hold an open forum to receive feedback on December 1. He encouraged everyone to attend. There was some discussion because December 1 is our regularly scheduled next meeting and we have two people scheduled to meet with us. Professor Sadkowski will be discussing a proposed new Global Studies major which requires approval of the college senate, and Professor Mauceri will discuss a task force report calling for revisions to the tenure and promotion process.

It was decided that the Academic Program Assessment process is of sufficient importance that we should reschedule our regular December meeting and senators should make every effort to attend the APA meeting instead. The senate meeting was tentatively rescheduled for December 8, and Chair Juby said she would contact our two guests to verify whether that date would work for them.

III. Meeting location for the spring semester

Due to the renovations of Sabin, spring meetings of the college senate will be held in Latham 218.

IV. Curriculum review

Chair Juby said that she would be contacting the department heads to find out who has the most extensive curriculum changes so that we can schedule those departments early in the curriculum review process for the spring semester. Senator Owusu said that Geography is planning some major revisions and may require a bit more time before submitting their package. Another department would also like an extension on submitting their documents until the third week of January. Senator Dunn said that her understanding was that in the past, departments with the biggest changes were usually scheduled last to give them a bit more time. Chair Juby said that it would be helpful to have the departments with major changes scheduled earlier so that they would have time to make additional changes if the senate had problems with any of the proposals. Dean Johnson said that the final approvals by the college senate are not due until the end of the semester, so there should still be time for departments to make any necessary adjustments as long as we start reviewing them after spring break. Chair Juby asked senators to check with their curriculum chairs to find out if their departments were planning any major curriculum changes.

V. Remarks from the Dean

Dean Johnson updated us on the status of several searches. SAC has made an offer to a candidate for their criminology program and Political Science is in the process of making their decision. Senator Owusu said that Geography has their short list. Dean Johnson said that the advertisements for the replacement dean have been placed in various periodicals. The closing date for applications is the end of January.

Dean Johnson also updated us on the plans for the renovations of Sabin. The plan is to have the building meet the LEED silver level of certification (LEED is a national program for certifying buildings as energy efficient and environmentally friendly). Political Science will move during finals week to the basement of CBB. The dean’s office will move in mid-December to Baker
Hall. (He was warned not to drink the water or breathe the air.) Social work will move in early January to Bartlett Hall. The next step will be asbestos mitigation and then demolition and reconstruction will begin in March. There will be a fence around the building, but he believes that it will be possible to have through-traffic to both the north and the south of the building.

Political Science is currently undergoing its seven-year program review. The self study is complete and is currently being reviewed by the internal committee.

Dean Johnson also reminded us about the April 17-18 campus visit and lecture by Carol Gilligan. She standardly requires one half of her honorarium in advance, and they are negotiating with the Foundation to allow that. She is very well known and we expect the event to garner lots of media attention and be well attended.

Finally, the economy is not doing well. There is no word yet of reversions for this year, and Iowa is not in as a bad a shape as some states. Nonetheless, we need to be cautious in spending money. As always, the administration plans to make the full funding of salaries their top request to the Iowa legislature. Dean Johnson also noted that this is the year for negotiations with United Faculty and those negotiations must be concluded or mediated by March 1. We expect tuition to increase by around 4 percent depending on various factors. Senator Lynch said that she had also heard that the Board of Regents was trying to negotiate changes in health benefits such as higher deductibles.

Senator Yu asked whether the Alderman money will be available for campus speakers in the future and how departments could apply for this money. Dean Johnson said that this year the Department of Psychology proposed bringing in Dr. Gilligan, who is a well-known interdisciplinary speaker. He said that there is still some money available for minor support (in the $100s range) for other speakers such as a recent visit by a feminist sociologist. He said that in the future, there would be a budget of approximately $15,000 per year for speakers and that this could either be used for one expensive event, such as this year, divided into smaller amounts to support several speakers, or even used for something like an interdisciplinary conference. Senator Lynch suggested that some type of process should be created for making these decisions so that people will know how to apply for funding and it can be distributed equitably.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:30.

Respectfully submitted,

Cyndi Dunn