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University of Northern Iowa Graduate Council Minutes, November 12, 2015

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UNI Graduate Council Minutes #1050

UNI Graduate Council Minutes from November 12, 2015

Present: Amin, Beall, Calderon, Clayton, Cutter, Deemer, Dhanwada, Hanson, Juby, Kucuksari, Pohl, Power, Rod-Welch, Schwieger, Teske.

Absent: Fontana

Chair Clayton called the meeting to order at 3:30 p.m.

Announcements:

Rod-Welch: Announced second annual International Education Week “Around the World in 180 minutes conference” to learn about different cultures. The Graduate College is co-sponsoring the event, everyone was encouraged to attend, free food, prizes, giveaways, and entertainment.

Gayle Pohl: Announced 2 events organized by her students this week in support of the American Heart Association and Women in Red.

Approval of Minutes from October 22nd, moved by Amin, seconded by Kucuksari, Minutes were approved.

Graduate College Reports:

Report from Interim Dean Dhanwada:

Dhanwada told the Graduate Council that assessment of graduate programs was now the responsibility of the Graduate College. She mentioned that Associate Dean Cutter will be talking more about assessment today.

She discussed the theme of “Building Community”. This is a focus of the Graduate College this year – it will include graduate students, the graduate coordinators and graduate faculty. To build community, she suggested there needs to be an effective coordination among graduate students, graduate faculty, and graduate programs – that is, all members of the community get together talk about what should we do, where should we go? The Graduate College will facilitate this initiative. One way is to promote the newly developed UNI Grad Chat – a private Facebook page where graduate students can post their thoughts and share information.

Professional development of graduate students was also discussed. The Graduate College will provide space and opportunities for the graduate students to practice their presentation skills, career-building, resume-developing skills. She encouraged Graduate

Council members to spread the word so that graduate students in their areas know to take advantage of these opportunities.

The Graduate student symposium is coming up on April 6, 2016. Dhanwada mentioned that for students to feel more prepared and comfortable in presenting their work, there will be workshops in January for students that show them how to prepare a poster presentation and how to give an oral presentation.

Report from Director Schwieger:

Schwieger requested Graduate Council members to share their ideas about other professional development workshop ideas. She provided more specific dates for the student workshops: they will be given in the last 2-weeks of January

- a) Poster Presentation Workshop will be done by Dhanwada.
- b) Oral Presentation Workshop will be done by Cutter.
- c) Schwieger will be doing several workshops for the student how to development resume, cover letter, curriculum vita, behavior based interviewing etc.

Mass publicity will be done and materials will be ready soon for the students to register for the symposium and various workshops.

Report from Associate Dean Cutter:

Poster and Oral presentation workshop will be done early of the semester before the symposium deadline, please encourage students to submit papers for the conference and to attend the workshops.

Kucuksari: Suggested that UNI think about creating a non-credit course called “Preparing Future Faculty” modeled on courses offered at other universities for UNI’s graduate students for professional development. There was some discussion about having this course as a certificate or a workshop.

Report from Graduate Faculty Chair Beall:

Today’s brown bag seminar from Disa Cornish with 16 in attendance, mostly students, talked about how rural food service directors have problems dealing with federal food guidelines for the Healthy Hunger Free Kids act.

The next speaker is Kim Huckstadt who will be presenting his research in January about “Governors accountability task force on standard base teacher valuation on an instruction professional practice in Iowa”.

Beall commented that she has a long list of possible presenters for the Brown Bag seminars and that we could have more than one presentation a month in the future. She thought this would be a great way to know about the types of research faculty are doing at UNI.

Report from Graduate Council Chair Clayton:

Clayton reminded the Graduate Council that Kent Johnson and Belle Cowden from Continuing Education will attend the next council meeting (December 10th) to talk about distance education and discuss online programs that are offered at UNI through their office.

New Business:

Graduate Program assessment:

Cutter said that in the past several years all undergraduate and graduate major programs on campus have been submitting a yearly assessment report to the Office of Academic Assessment. The location to where assessment reports are sent has changed from this summer. The undergraduate program assessment reports now go to the Office of Undergraduate Studies and the graduate assessment reports will come to the Graduate College. The Graduate College will now house them and post relevant information on their website.

For this year, reporting forms from last year were used. This was a two page template that asked about current assessment data and how the previous year's data had been shared. Cutter provided a brief overview of current assessment practices that were generally being used in the departments. First, the departments create a set of student learning goals, then they develop a student outcomes assessment plan (e.g., say specifically what will be done within the program to conduct the assessment; what indicators will be used, who will look at these goals and indicators, how will you disseminate the information, how will you use these results to develop future directions?). Then, they create a yearly report based on all these findings. Since review of assessment of graduate programs is now a responsibility of the Graduate College, Cutter suggested that some group in the Graduate College will need to review these reports and provide feedback, and asked if the Graduate Council could be that group.

Deemer asked if the Graduate Council would be providing feedback on the data analysis in the reports with regard to its effectiveness and if it was valid.

Dhanwada said that assessing the validity of data would not really be the expectation of the reviewers at this stage. She said that reviewers were not necessarily going to be content experts - that would fall to the program faculty. Reviewers would provide feedback on the assessment reports with regard to the learning outcomes listed in the

plan and if the indicators and methods being used to assess the outcomes were appropriate.

Cutter explained that reviewing the assessment reports was not to determine if the data analysis was appropriate for any type of publication standards. Assessment should be used to see if students are meeting expectations, learning outcomes set by the programs. It should be used for program improvement and perhaps if the data justified, it may be used to show the need for a new faculty line. She added that right now the Graduate College does not receive a lot of the functional details from the graduate programs. The new reporting policy should put these programs in an advantageous position by way of being more transparent and receiving valuable feedback from faculty and students across the campus. She invited council members to join in this assessment group.

Pohl said she could help with the assessment. She shared that she had been a part of the SOA committee at different levels for a long time. There were guidelines and procedures already in place for evaluating programs. The existing guidelines will be of help when Graduate College gets into this. These are very good resources and the work is doable.

Power expressed concern that this might be too much work for the Graduate Council to do in a timely fashion. There might need to be subgroup formed to read all these reports coming from 40 or more graduate programs at UNI. There is also issue of faculty from one discipline not fully understanding the report from another department. Additionally, he did not think that this role fell under the purview of the Graduate Council since this was a body that recommended policy and reviewed curriculum; he did not think that this group should be reviewing assessment reports.

Cutter explained that she understood that we may not all be trained to read assessment reports and that the Graduate College was planning to bring in outside assessment experts in the Spring to provide training in best practices for reviewers as well as departmental programs who would need help with their plans. Discussions continued on whether and how the Graduate Council would be willing to review these reports. A suggestion was made that perhaps only a percentage of reports would be reviewed each year to lighten the work load if the Graduate Council takes this on.

Brown Bag Discussions:

Clayton said traditionally the Brown Bag seminar is done in a way where a person speaks about his or her research. However, a couple of times there were informal discussion sessions where the members of the audience were able to take part in conversations on specific topics. Clayton presented the idea of increasing the number of these conversation type sessions in the future. It could be in the form of a panel

discussions or simply a group meeting over lunch to talk about issues. Several suggestions were made by the attending members, including:

The role of online classes in the graduate programs.

Crisis preparedness of faculty and students, resolving confrontational situations in classroom.

Resilience among students (Beall has article on this topic)

Diversity on campus (both domestic and international), etc.

Lot of these topics are in the national news that are directly linked to campus environment. These issues are also heavily discussed at UNI so this would be a great time for the Grad College to take the leading role and facilitate these much needed conversations.

Meeting adjourned. The next will be on December 10th at 3:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Rubina Chowdhury

Secretary