

4-14-2016

University of Northern Iowa Graduate Council Minutes, April 14, 2016

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Recommended Citation

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UNI Graduate Council Minutes #1055

UNI Graduate Council Minutes from April 14, 2016

Present: Amin, Calderon, Cutter, Deemer, Dhanwada, Fontana, Kucuksari, Ostapyuk, Pohl, Power, Rod-Welch, and Teske.

Absent: Beall, Berendzen, Hanson, Juby, and Schwieger.

Chair Pohl called the meeting to order at 3:35 p.m.

Approval of Minutes from February 25, moved by Power and seconded by Rod-Welch, minutes were approved.

Approval of Minutes from March 24, moved by Kucuksari and seconded by Fontana, minutes were approved.

Graduate College Reports:

Report from Dean Dhanwada:

Dean Dhanwada reported on the events that occurred in the Graduate College in April. On April 1, the Graduate Program Assessment Workshop was held. The session was designed for graduate coordinators and others that are responsible for developing/writing program assessment reports; it occurred in the morning and was attended by 29-30 people. A survey was sent out to ask for evaluations. Of those that have so far responded, many found the workshop to be quite useful; there were several comments on future improvements. Attendance was lower for the afternoon session which was designed for reviewers of assessment plans. The Graduate College will follow up and continue with these types of workshops in the future.

On April 6, the 9th Annual Graduate Student Symposium was held and had over 80 student presenters. It was nice to see the many faculty come and visit the posters, the oral presentations and the creative performances; overall the event was a success although we have to work on establishing a larger audience for the evening performances. Planning is underway for next year's program as it will be the 10th Annual Symposium, we want it to be a special event. It has been suggested that a time change might help with increasing audience. There are plans to organize a special program, perhaps with a keynote speaker. Additionally, several Brown Bag seminars were held as well as the student professional development workshops.

Report from Associate Dean Cutter:

Associate Dean Cutter reported on some issues brought to the Graduate College with regard to receiving letters of recommendations for graduate admission in a timely

manner. There were several issues but primarily, the letters were not always ending up in the departments so that students would not have “complete” graduate applications. It was suggested that we might want to consider purchasing a software program that can help to alleviate some of the confusion in receiving the outside support letters. Conversations have begun with the Graduate College and members of the ITS team at UNI to invite vendors to check out the products. These meetings are set for the beginning of May. Council members agreed that we need to work on this issue to minimize resending of support letters by references. Several possible areas to address: with some international countries, certain links tend to be blocked by their governments. It was also suggested that we should let the applicants know when their file is complete so they can follow up on requirements when needed.

Report from Chair Pohl:

The Annual Graduate Faculty meeting will be held in the Scholar Space, room 301 of the

Rod Library on April 28 at 3 p.m. Pohl encouraged everyone to promote this important event at this important time - the graduate faculty need to attend and talk about “who we are” and what “we want to be”.

New Business:

Associate Dean Cutter brought up two issues with regard to the awards given out by the Graduate College. Discussion on the first issue occurred on the composition of an award committee. Currently, the Distinguished Scholar committee consists of the Associate Graduate Dean (Chair, non-voting member), two Graduate Council members, Chair of the Graduate Faculty, a previous Distinguished Scholar winner and one regular member of the graduate faculty. The concern brought up was that there is a limited pool of current Distinguished Scholars in the faculty; there are only 7 former winners of the award able to serve, and one faculty member is retiring. With the award designated to be given every year, it was suggested that in the future it might be difficult to find a former awardee who is willing to serve on the committee or avoid asking the same awardee to serve over several years if they are the only person willing to serve. Therefore to avoid getting into a situation where we aren't able to have a previous awardee, Cutter asked if a member of the graduate council can be added as a substitute for the committee if a distinguished scholar awardee was not available to serve. Fontana asked if it was okay to have 4 committee members instead of 5 voting members. Several council members suggested that it may not be appropriate to have a 4-member committee, if a tie occurred – it would be difficult to resolve. Power made a motion to state that if there is no past distinguished scholar available to serve on the committee, a Graduate Council member would be able to serve in that capacity as a substitute. Motion passed.

The second issue that was brought up was to align the language on all three awards given by the Graduate College. As the Distinguished Scholar and the Lubker award are

both research awards, Cutter stated that members from both award committees this year felt that it made sense to limit faculty members to applying for only one of these awards in a single year. It was suggested that an addition to the current language be made so that a single faculty member may not apply for the Lubker and the Distinguished Scholar Award in the same year. The motion (moved by Power) was that if a faculty member is nominated for both awards in the same year, he or she has to select which award they will apply for. Also, since both the Lubker and the Graduate Teaching award have language as to how many times a faculty member can win the award, it was suggested that the following language be added to the Distinguished Scholar Award: "A faculty member may receive this award only once." Motion passed. Both ideas were incorporated into the motion and it was passed.

Further discussion occurred on TOEFL score requirements for international students seeking graduate admission. The current policy, changed last year, is that international students who have been admitted unconditionally and have met the minimum requirements for the TOEFL, can take graduate courses for credit. The students who have not met the minimum TOEFL requirement and thus have been admitted provisionally cannot take graduate classes and can only attain "unconditional" status (and take graduate courses in their program) if they take the TOEFL and score above the minimum. In the past, if students didn't have the minimum TOEFL score, they could enroll in the Culture and Intensive English Program (CIEP) to substitute for TOEFL. However, the current policy states that the students still have to take the TOEFL exam to be considered for unconditional admission even after completion of CIEP. Dhanwada asked the Graduate Council several questions with regard to the current policy. She asked if this was fair to the international students that come and complete the CIEP courses with passing grades and was having this requirement detrimental for international recruitment. Can this requirement be revised to help the students have more certainty in obtaining unconditional admission? Again, according to the current rule, after passing CIEP, the student still needs to take TOEFL, otherwise they can't enroll in graduate courses.

Members on the Council recalled the discussion that led to the change in policy last year. The idea was that the student would not be able to succeed in graduate level classes with their language deficiencies. The members of the Graduate Council at that time were of the opinion that the students should not be able to take graduate courses without completing the language requirements and passing the test. Discussions continued on whether it was fair to allow them to come to UNI as provisionally admitted students, but not allow them to take courses in their program. In their discussions with the UNI International Programs and CIEP offices, Dhanwada and Cutter stated that they were told that it was difficult to attract international students with the uncertainty of being able to be fully admitted to a graduate program even if the students were willing to go through the CIEP program and successfully complete it. With this context in mind, some members of the Graduate Council thought that students who were admitted provisionally due to low TOEFL scores could achieve unconditional admission if they could secure a threshold score when taking the highest level of CIEP classes (level

7). Rod-Welch stated that CIEP was not just a program for learning language basics. Students going through the program also learn other skills. Concern was expressed for the students in that if they passed the accredited CIEP program, but later failed the required TOEFL exam, they would be discontinued from their graduate programs. After much discussion, a revision to the current policy was proposed. It was proposed that the Graduate College should accept successful completion (having a grade of "B" in the 3 courses of Level 7) of CIEP to substitute for the TOEFL requirement. Council members wanted to check with the CIEP program to determine if this was the appropriate level for proficiency. Cutter was to collect the information and report back to the Council before asking for a vote. Further discussions will continue electronically.

Old business:

Discussion continued on developing a mission and vision of the Graduate College. A summary of ideas and inputs from members of the faculty were distributed. Everyone was encouraged to provide further feedback in the process and encourage to attend the Annual Meeting on April 28 at 3:00 pm.

Additional discussion also continued on the idea of the Graduate College having a separate Dean given that the current Dean is also serving as the Associate Provost. Chair Pohl asked Dean Dhanwada, since her job duties have changed recently, did she feel that she had more time to focus on the Graduate College? Dhanwada reported that as of January 1st, three of the offices which previously reported to the Associate Provost of the Academic Affairs, now report to the Director of the Office of Undergraduate Studies. The offices are the Academic Learning Center, Academic Advising Center, and the Honors Program. Dhanwada said that due to this recent reorganization she is finding more time to devote to Graduate College affairs but left it to the Council to determine if the activities carried out by her and the Graduate College staff this year were satisfactory.

Meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Rubina Chowdhury

Secretary