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University of Northern Iowa Graduate Council Minutes, February 26, 2015

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UNI Graduate Council Minutes #1043

February 26, 2015

Present: Caswell, Chatham-Carpenter, Clayton, Coon, Fontana, Kucuksari, Teske

Guests: Joy Thorson

Absent: Beall, Calderon, Deemer, Gacke, Nesbit, Noh, Pohl, Power, Stokes

The meeting was called to order by Chair Clayton. Motion by Fontana to approve the minutes of the February 12, 2015 meeting; seconded by Caswell. Motion approved.

Graduate College Reports

Chatham-Carpenter announced that there are two options for the graduate student commencement for Spring 2015; Friday, May 8 and Saturday, May 9. The Office of the Registrar has sent an e-mail with details of all commencement information, although ceremony locations have yet to be determined. Also, as Chair of the Graduate Faculty, Beall will be serving on the stage at the graduate commencement ceremonies. Chatham-Carpenter also mentioned that the UNI Day at the Capitol event was successful.

As part of the Commencement Committee, Coon reported that several venues are being considered for the commencement ceremonies. Venues will be set once students have submitted their commencement reply forms. The reply form deadline is April 1. Chatham-Carpenter noted that future commencement ceremonies will take place on Saturdays and dates are now posted on the Office of the Registrar's website.

On behalf of Schwieger, Clayton reminded Council members of the Graduate Student Symposium on April 1; registration deadline is tomorrow, February 27.

Chair of Graduate Faculty Report

On behalf of Beall, Clayton noted that Mark Myers with the Department of Biology will present a brown bag lecture on Monday, March 2 at Noon in the Presidential Room, Maucker Union.

New Business

Discussion of Allowing Programs to Award Graduate Assistantships to Students Pursuing a Second Master's Degree

Clayton said that after the last Council meeting's discussion regarding whether or not students should be allowed to be awarded a graduate assistantship for a second master's degree, the bigger question became why departments should not be allowed to do so if they have the funding. She added that the policy for not awarding an assistantship has been in place for some time without a clear reason. Coon commented that long ago there was no limit on the number of semesters of support a student could receive. As a result there were cases where students added courses just so they could receive support. The total number of semesters of support was then

limited to four semesters for master's students and six semesters for doctoral students. There was previously language about a student not extending their program that was later removed. Now the question is whether or not the limit is still something that is needed.

Clayton said the challenge lies in that the amount of funding is very limited. She has seen situations where if students are making continued progress then the departments award an assistantship as long as the student is eligible, so the longer the eligibility, the fewer new assistantships the department would have to offer, so departments have to find a balance.

On behalf of Mary Herring, Teske commented that the option to allow the assistantships for a second masters, if students have already received an assistantship for the first masters seems very limiting and funding should be spread out to more people. If someone gets their first master's degree paid for with an assistantship, they should pay for the second one so funding could go to someone else pursuing a first masters or a doctorate. Clayton responded that one possibility would be to at least offer the department the option to offer the assistantship. She gave an example of a program or non-academic department (Registrar's Office, Admissions, STEM, LAC, etc.) that may have a specific type of project, a grant-funded project, where only a limited number of students would really be eligible. If the pool is too restricted the department may not be able to find any students at all. Programs should not be required to give the student support for a second masters, but at least they could have the opportunity to make that decision.

In response to a question about whether or not a second master's degree could come from the same department, Coon responded that it typically does not, however, the School of Music does have students who pursue two master of music degrees, with separate majors. Coon added that if the master's degrees are done concurrently, there is enough overlap, as students can overlap nine credits, and with that nine credit overlap and the fact that they intend to take a little higher credit load, they can pretty much do the two degrees in three years. In the past the School of Music has requested the ability to offer an extra year of support if a student wants to do this.

In additional conversation, the following points were considered:

- Related to concerns about giving support to a current student instead of using it for recruiting, it was noted that a student in a second master's program *is* a new recruit for that program.
- Assistantships are competitive, so a second master's student has to rise to the top.
- Coon noted the potential for abuse by saying that a student may declare a second master's to get support and then drop it after the support has been received. Clayton added that there is no guarantee that a student with a GA will even finish their first master's and they are not required to give that GA money back. It is assumed that programs will vet their applicants.
- Coon estimated that less than 1% of graduate students are in two master's programs at the same time and that perhaps about 5% of graduate students come back later for a second master's degree.

- Related to a question about whether or not we had checked with other institutions to see what their practices are, it was noted that Research One institutions pretty much fund who they want. They do not have the rules regarding limits. In addition, Coon had not seen anything on Iowa and Iowa State's websites and peer institutions had not been checked.

Motion by Fontana to remove the restriction on Graduate Assistantship (GA) and Graduate College Tuition Scholarship support for a student pursuing a second Master's degree. Such support is not guaranteed and would be at the discretion of the hiring department (for GA) or the second Master's program (for Graduate College Tuition Scholarship); seconded by Kucuksari. Motion approved.

The meeting adjourned at 4:13 p.m.

The next scheduled meeting is Thursday, March 12, 2015 at 3:30 p.m. in Lang 115.

Respectfully submitted,

Cheryl Nedrow
Secretary