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University of Northern Iowa Graduate Council Minutes, January 24, 2013

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UNI Graduate Council Minutes #1020

January 24, 2013

Present: Caswell, Christ, Clayton, Coon, Hays, Licari, Pohl, Schmitz, Waldron, Roberts (for Milambiling), Zhanova

Absent: Bartlett, Iqbal, Power, Terlip, Witt

Guests: Susan Hill, Susie Schwieger, Joy Thorson

The meeting was called to order by Chair Clayton. Motion by Pohl to approve the minutes of the November 8, 2012 meeting; seconded by Waldron. Motion approved.

Graduate College Reports – Licari reported that yesterday he held a Graduate Student Advisory Board (GSAB) Meeting/Open Forum where there was constructive feedback from graduate students from around the University. One suggestion he brought back was to have a checklist for students who are finishing their degree, as there is not currently a consolidated list of all the steps that need to be taken. A checklist will be provided via the Graduate College website in order to minimize confusion and have transparency in terms of fees, etc. As a result of a question he was asked, the Graduate College will provide updated information related to upcoming events, conferences and professional speakers not only on the UNI campus, but in the area.

Licari added that at a minimum, there would be an exchange of event information with the other Regents Institutions, as well as private institutions in the area.

Licari noted that one of his priorities as dean has been to try to figure out ways to increase enrollment, including recruiting, facilitating communication with prospective students, and generally promoting graduate education. Kent Johnson and Licari met with a representative from the Stamats firm out of Cedar Rapids to learn what Stamats could do to examine efforts at the Graduate College level in terms of being able to communicate effectively and follow up with prospective students and how we market ourselves. The Stamats representative is putting the results of that meeting together; Licari will keep the Council informed as the process moves forward. He added that he is appreciative that Provost Gibson has been very supportive of this effort and is helping with the cost.

Licari said he would encourage Council members and their graduate faculty colleagues to attend the presidential candidate open fora and ask questions about how the candidates might want to promote graduate education at UNI.

Coon reported that she had been involved in several meetings over the last several weeks that started as a question regarding students who were enrolled in both undergraduate and graduate courses and what that meant for their financial aid eligibility. The U.S. Department of Education has gotten much stricter about what is aid-eligible. Students must be enrolled at least half-time in their current degree program in order to be eligible for federal loans. What that means is that if a student is taking

graduate credit as a senior, that is not applying to their current degree program, so they have to be at least half-time undergraduate in order to be eligible for their undergraduate financial aid. Likewise, graduate students who are taking undergraduate courses have to be at least half-time graduate students in a degree program in order to be eligible for the graduate financial aid. Coon wanted to hear from Council members about their current graduate students and mentioned that there have been a couple of students who are not eligible; those students have been contacted and are being worked with.

Another discussion that took place during recent meetings was related to students who are registered this semester and have not provided proof of a bachelor's degree. In the old system students were switched to undergraduate status until they provided the information. With the current system there are a number of steps that need to be taken that involve both the Registrar's Office and Admissions in order to make this happen. For Fall 2013 admissions, if there is an indicator that says the student needs to provide a transcript, they will have their registration blocked, will not be able to get a transcript, will not be able to view their grades and they will not have financial aid dispersed. Coon advised that as communication with admitted students takes place to make sure the student is told that they need to have a final transcript that shows their degree.

Schwieger noted that the Sixth Annual Graduate Student Symposium is set for Thursday, April 4. One of the marketing strategies being used for the first time is setting up 5-minute class presentations to inform students about the symposium. She said ten presentations were given this week and have been well received. The first symposium preparation workshop will take place Monday, January 28 at Noon. Schwieger will be conducting resume writing workshops, as well as behavior based interviewing workshops for the spring semester. A panel discussion for students who are interested in pursuing a doctorate will be scheduled in February or March. In addition, Deanne Gute will conduct a workshop on developing a personal statement yet this semester.

Pohl reminded everyone that Hays would be speaking at the Brown Bag Lecture on Thursday, January 31. In order to represent all colleges in the brown bags there will be two lectures in March; one in early March and then in late March.

Discussion and vote on proposed changes (addition of a non-thesis option) to the Women's and Gender Studies Curriculum

Clayton noted that in reviewing the Women's and Gender Studies (WGS) proposal to add a non-thesis option, it seemed there were pretty thorough consultations with all of the groups involved. Hill noted that she was one of the main proposal readers in CHAS and thought the restructuring was good, with the addition of a couple of courses in the thesis track and the addition of a non-thesis track with two focus areas; one on women's health and one on gender and violence prevention, which are two strengths of the program's curriculum. Clayton clarified that the restructuring was to add the non-thesis option, drop the *Introduction to Graduate Research in Women's and Gender Studies* course and add an internship course and a one-credit proseminar. It was noted

that there are no additional funding expenses related to these changes. Licari commented that the changes seemed consistent with other non-thesis programs . It was noted that the 6000-level internship would be specifically for the non-thesis track and includes basically the writing of the culminating project part that is the alternative of the thesis. In additional conversation it was mentioned that students will need to identify rather early whether they are going to be thesis or applied, because it becomes cumbersome to cross over. Some discussion about a possible timeline for Faculty Senate and Board of Regents approval and student enrollment in the program followed. Hays made a motion to approve the proposed Women's and Gender Studies Curriculum packet; seconded by Waldron. Motion passed unanimously. Clayton will bring the proposal forward to the Faculty Senate.

Discussion and vote on allowing graduate students to take a 4000-level course for personal interest (not as part of a graduate program) when a 5000-level option is available

Clayton started the conversation by giving an example of a student wanting to take a foreign language classes or education classes for personal interest. She said that is fine if the courses are at the 1000, 2000, or 3000 level. If the undergraduate course the student would like to take is offered at the 4000 and 5000 level (the old 100g classes), they may not take the 4000-level class they must take the 5000-level classes. Clayton asked whether or not this is something the Council wanted to change. It was pointed out that the old system could not support this, but the SIS can allow this to happen. In the past, the 5000-level course would be listed on the graduate transcript, but would not be counted toward the degree; the grade would count toward the cumulative GPA. Coon clarified that courses taken Fall 2011 and later would be put on separate undergraduate and graduate transcripts. If a student went to another institution, this would make it clear whether the course taken was a graduate or undergraduate course.

After a question about whether or not this circumstance comes up very often, Coon responded that it didn't until early in the current semester. At that point the student had to take the course credit/no credit or audit at the graduate level. Coon added that she was surprised by the number of graduate students who are taking undergraduate courses for personal interest and not to fulfill a prerequisite, etc. The system will not allow a student to get credit for both the undergraduate and graduate version of the same course. Students will not be allowed to take a course for undergraduate credit and then change it to a graduate level course.

Hays made a motion to allow graduate students to take the 4000-level undergraduate version of a course for personal interest and receive undergraduate credit when the 5000-level graduate course is available; seconded by Christ. Motion passed unanimously.

Discussion of policies regarding a student's eligibility for a graduate assistantship when the student has grades of incomplete (I) for the previous semester

Clayton explained that each semester a student's GPA has to be reviewed in order to determine their eligibility for financial assistance. When a student has Incompletes for many or all courses, it is difficult to know what their GPA actually is. Examples of circumstances where a student might have to miss various amounts of course work were given. Clayton added that it then becomes difficult to evaluate whether or not a student is passing a class, even though technically you can't get an Incomplete if you weren't passing at the time of the Incomplete. Since there is currently no policy in place, Clayton asked for the Council's input on how to deal with the issue. It is not a real big problem from Spring to Fall, since there is the whole summer where students should be able to make up any work that they missed and complete an Incomplete before the start of the Fall semester. The problem is what happens from Fall to Spring; there are holidays, vacation, the faculty member may not be available to give or grade assignments. There was a suggestion that this issue should be linked to the Graduate Assistant handbook and the policy for temporarily suspending graduate assistantship, because if a student is taking an Incomplete at the graduate level and the situation is severe enough, then there is probably going to be stoppage in their current Graduate Assistant duties also. Hays said he would really hate to see another complicated road block to a student resuming their assistantship in the Spring. He noted that University policy says students have six months to finish their Incomplete, so the current policy gives them a fairly liberal amount of time to get that done and he would not want to see assistantships tied up in this. He urged that whatever policy might be adopted, that the Graduate Coordinators would have the flexibility to work with the individual student's situation to decide how to appropriately deal with that student. Since Graduate Coordinators know their students they should be allowed to make a judgment on what's appropriate given all the circumstances.

Related to calculating the GPA, there was a question as to whether it is more of an issue when there are multiple Incompletes. Coon responded that she thought so; if there is one Incomplete the Plan GPA can be calculated easily, but if there are 12 hours of Incompletes that all change to F's, we know what the Plan GPA is going to do and we can't say the student would be okay. Waldron noted that providing an assistantship based on what we think is going to happen limits other students who have shown they can do the work and are able to maintain what they need to do in order to have an assistantship. She has had students in her classes who would love to have an assistantship, but for whatever reason don't and yet there is a student who has 12 credit hours of Incompletes who still has an assistantship.

Clayton said it was difficult for her to see a single policy that would work for every student, especially when the University says you have six months to make up your work. Thorson suggested that if the student was getting all Incompletes the Graduate Coordinator could meet with the student and set up a contract stating what their plan is to finish. Christ added that there needs to be a plan for eliminating the Incompletes before we could even consider giving support. We need to at least know some expectation of what will happen. Coon agreed that with an established schedule for

completion, she would feel more comfortable approving the Graduate Assistantship and she hasn't had that in the current cases.

Blank grades for students was also mentioned and it was noted that these are sometimes not the fault of the student. Clayton noted that there should not be a policy that penalizes a student for something that faculty does. It was also mentioned that RC's are not the same issue, since they are given when it's expected that the work takes longer than a semester.

At the conclusion of the discussion, the Council agreed that having a plan in place for students who are receiving Incompletes to finish would be appropriate. Clayton will draft a sample plan for the Council's review.

The meeting adjourned at 5:00 p.m.

The next meeting is scheduled to take place on Thursday, February 14, 2013 at 3:30 p.m. in Lang 115.

Respectfully submitted,

Cheryl Nedrow
Secretary