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# University of Northern Iowa Graduate Council Minutes, November 8, 2012

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# UNI Graduate Council Minutes #1019

November 8, 2012

Present: Bartlett, Christ, Clayton, Coon, Hays, Iqbal, Licari, Milambiling, Pohl, Schmitz, Terlip, Waldron, Witt, Wynstra (for Caswell), Zhbanova

Absent: Power

Guest: Susie Schwieger, Lisa Steimel, Joy Thorson

The meeting was called to order by Chair Clayton. Motion by Christ to approve the minutes of the October 25, 2012 meeting; seconded by Pohl. Motion approved.

Graduate College Reports – Licari stated that he thought the Graduate Coordinator meetings held on October 29 and 30 went well. One item that came out of the meetings was a consensus that it would be helpful to have graduate applications centrally-collected by the Office of Admissions, provided that Graduate Coordinators would have access to the electronic information. This would allow the coordinator to see what the applications look like as information is being gathered. Licari said that once everyone is certain this capability exists he thinks it would make sense to move in that direction. Christie Kangas has questions from the coordinator meetings that need to be addressed so the process will not move forward until the Council is sure those questions have been answered.

Another point from the coordinator meetings was the need to revise the graduate assistantship application. Steimel e-mailed graduate coordinators a draft of the revised application earlier in the day. Licari asked everyone to review the application and provide feedback in a timely fashion. The revised form would be used for the next application cycle in the spring. The revision of the Graduate Assistant Handbook was another issue covered at the meetings. Licari said he appreciated everyone's input both at the coordinator meetings and via e-mail.

Coon reported that the student request system has gone through a major overhaul and overall it has gone fairly well. A few issues that have come up which hadn't come up in testing will be addressed next Wednesday when revisions go into production. Coon pointed out that a change indirectly related to the student request system is that graduate students must submit a student request if they want to take undergraduate courses. Only the Registrar's Office can place graduate students in undergraduate courses; the student cannot register themselves for the course nor can the department, which also applies to pre-requisites. In response to questions about why this was done, Licari said that there were many graduate students who mistakenly registered for the undergraduate version of a course that have both undergraduate and graduate numbers (old 100g courses), which is extremely difficult to correct. Licari added that this may be somewhat of a challenge for programs such as Hays', but the problem is smaller if it is handled on the front end. Coon noted that the undergraduate courses would not appear on the graduate transcript anymore. Zhbanova asked how a student who is taking an undergraduate course that has to appear on their transcript for licensure purposes would be able to prove they took the course. Coon responded that first the

undergraduate transcript prints out, then the graduate transcript, so there would be two transcripts for any student who has taken both undergraduate and graduate courses. Schwieger said that on Wednesday, November 14, Licari would be hosting an open forum for graduate students only; 25 students have signed up so far. Related to marketing for the Graduate Student Symposium, Schwieger said that in January she and graduate assistant, Brittany Funke, will go into classes to talk about the symposium and to encourage students to participate. Tomorrow is the application deadline for the Graduate College assistantship opening.

Pohl reported that the second Brown Bag lecture presented by Cynthia Goatley and Rebecca Burkhardt took place yesterday and went very well, with approximately 30 people in attendance. The next Brown Bag, "*Porn Chic: Exploring the Contours of Raunch Eroticism*," presented by Annette Lynch, is scheduled for Wednesday, December 5 at Noon. Brown Bags have been set through the end of the year, with the exception of March.

#### Approval of the Graduate Assistant Handbook

Coon said that instead of going back through the entire handbook, she would highlight the changes that were made after the last Council meeting. She noted that there had been questions about including additional absence information. As a result, a section regarding several types of absences was added; jury duty, military service, National Guard, as well as a statement that graduate assistants do not meet the eligibility criteria for leave under the Family and Medical Leave Act. There was a question as to why graduate assistants would not be eligible. Coon responded that the HRS website notes that a certain number of hours have to be worked and a certain duration of employment is required and graduate assistants do not meet the criteria. Adding wording to the handbook regarding other reasonable types of absences, such as being subpoenaed as a witness, was also discussed. Related to FMLA and Parental Leave Policies, Terlip asked why the stipend is suspended during this time. Coon responded that the assistantship stipend is pay for work performed and if the graduate assistant is not working their leave is unpaid. Terlip said she challenges this every time it comes up and wants it on the record that she would suggest that FMLA leave be paid leave for both faculty/staff and graduate assistants, even though it is not currently paid leave and federal law does not require it.

Related to the issue of retention of graduate assistant performance appraisals, Coon informed the Council that HRS clarified that graduate assistants should have a personnel file in their department for all assistantship job descriptions and performance appraisals, and any negative evaluations or discipline issues and related documentation should be sent to HRS immediately so they also have a record. The department would keep a copy as well. The GA's personnel file that includes their job description and performance appraisals should be kept in the department for at least three years after the student is no longer a graduate assistant. This would include after they graduate or have ceased employment as a graduate assistant.

Zhbanova asked if a student could appeal an evaluation, because in some cases it could be misused or there may be cases where the student doesn't agree with the evaluation. Coon responded that there is a grievance policy in the handbook. Licari

added that there is a special grievance policy for disagreements about an assistantship and the manner in which you have been supervised, etc. Related to termination, Coon noted that this is the reason for the need for the documentation that includes the job description and performance appraisal. Zhanova followed up by asking what to do if the student disagrees with something in the position description at the start of the assistantship. Is there a way to negotiate? Licari mentioned that this is why the first meeting of the graduate assistant and the supervisor is so important. If there is a fundamental disagreement over roles and responsibilities as a GA and the student has applied for one particular type of assistantship, then it probably is not a good fit. The GA supervisor or the program coordinator should realize this is not going to work out very well and find an alternative.

Iqbal asked what a student would do if the duties are changed part way through the semester, and the student is asked to do something that is not in the job description and they do not want to do it. Licari responded that the student could file a grievance in that case. Hays said he thinks graduate coordinators have a responsibility to act as an intermediary and address the issue before it gets to a formal grievance.

Ways of wording the graduate assistant application to best match skills with the type of assistantship were discussed. It was suggested that having a checklist of skills on the application would be helpful in matching students to GA positions.

Hays asked if it is necessary for the handbook to indicate a February 1 deadline for applying for assistantships, as he uses a February 15 deadline and has for years. Hays also inquired if the graduate Dean could make allocations earlier than February 15. It was noted that Licari is dependent on budget determination before he can make allocations. Any information he could provide on February 1 would be a portion of what he is anticipating. He added that he does not want to allocate funding and then have to take it back. Hays said that in some ways he would rather have a firmer, later date, but then it gets back to the application deadline. Other Council members indicated they thought the wording was sufficiently flexible to cover later deadlines. Related to the February 1 application deadline Coon added that it is a common application deadline for international applicants, in order to be sure they can get all of their paperwork, have time to apply for a visa and any other information for fall admission. Clayton noted that the current wording does not preclude programs from setting a later deadline it only precludes them from setting the deadline earlier. After additional discussion regarding application deadlines, it was decided that the handbook would give the February 1 deadline with a note that the applicant should consult the specific program of interest for more information.

The Council decided that a revised version of the Graduate Assistant Handbook would be sent out and voted on electronically.

#### Discussion of the Opportunities to Enhance Graduate Education at UNI

As Clayton and Pohl were discussing the value of graduate education at UNI, they also tried to think of some opportunities to enhance graduate education at UNI. Clayton and Pohl had provided Council members with information related to the two of the main topics from their discussions, which were enrollment and financial support. Clayton opened the floor for discussion and added that the idea was to try to move forward with

opportunities as they relate to the Graduate Education Strategic Plan. Clayton said that the Council may want to add to the list provided or prioritize from the list.

During a discussion regarding the idea of hosting a campus visit day, Licari commented that this would need to be a very targeted and strategic effort. He noted that a group of undergraduate TRIO students would be coming to UNI from St. Olaf College in February, and there might be ways to get in touch with other institutions to bring in students who are looking for a campus visit. Licari will be meeting with these students and thought that other opportunities such as this one exist. Looking for opportunities related to community events or having a graduate career day in Waterloo or surrounding communities where professionals from the area would be invited to review the variety of graduate programs offered at UNI was also mentioned. Pohl said getting prospective students on campus in order for them to get the feel of the culture of the graduate student would be a benefit. She and Clayton were thinking of inviting students in the associations related to the various majors to come and review graduate program information. It was noted that in moving more toward online programming, the importance of getting prospective students on campus becomes a little less important and getting out into the community becomes more important. Licari responded that getting out into the communities and into the professions or employers is really important. He added that each program could do this individually, particularly if there is an advisory board for the program.

Clayton mentioned that there could be a group of like-minded programs that could also work together on going out into the community. She also thought there would be groups of programs interested in having undergraduates from private schools in Iowa come here for a day to visit. Licari said he encourages these efforts and asked what program coordinators need to help and support these efforts and make connections with the community, employers, and professions. His challenge is that the needs are different for each program, but if like programs are grouped together that might help. Holding a career fair to reach out to those in the community who have degrees and hadn't really thought about graduate school was also mentioned. Terlip said that another possibility would be to reach out to the undergraduate programs at the other Regents' institution and build relationships with them to bring students to UNI. She gave the example that Iowa State doesn't really have a Master's program in Communications, so it would make sense to build those sorts of relationships. Licari responded that he thought that was a very good idea. It was noted that having current graduate students go out to these institutions would be beneficial as well.

Waldron suggested that it might be helpful for the Council to develop some ways that the Graduate College could assist with recruitment and the coordinators could let the Council know which one would be their highest priority. Once that information is received, the Council could cluster programs with those same priorities together. At that point a Council member could work with a certain cluster of coordinators and then provide feedback to Licari. Hays noted that everyone needs to take a more do-it-yourself approach in getting the word out about graduate programs. Having the Graduate College help get the word out about the exciting things that students are doing in graduate programs and getting the word out to the media would be helpful. Licari noted that the Graduate College is happy to produce recruiting and promotional

materials to the extent that it can get information from graduate coordinators. He was in favor of forming sub-groups and having Council members work with those groups to identify what their needs are and what they want, as some coordinators may not have had to give this much thought. Licari concluded by saying that there are mechanisms, we just need to do the advertising and promotions.

The meeting adjourned at 4:57 p.m.

The next meeting is scheduled to take place on Thursday, December 13, 2012 at 3:30 p.m. in Lang 115.

Respectfully submitted,

Cheryl Nedrow  
Secretary

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#### **ADDENDUM**

#### **Results of Electronic Vote Related to Approval of Graduate Assistantship Handbook**

**December 13, 2012** - After the reviewing the final version of the Graduate Assistant Handbook, Pohl made a motion to accept the Handbook as presented; Seconded by Caswell. Motion passed 13-0.

Respectfully submitted,

Cheryl Nedrow  
Secretary