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University of Northern Iowa Graduate Council Minutes, April 26, 2012

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UNI Graduate Council Minutes #1014

April 26, 2012

Present: Botzum, Caswell, Clayton, Coon, Etscheidt, Hays, Husband, Iqbal, Schuchart

Absent: Bartlett, Pohl, Power, Waldron

Guest: Gene Lutz, Director of Center for Social and Behavioral Research and member of Presidential Review Committee

The meeting was called to order by Chair Clayton. Motion by Nelson to approve the minutes of the March 22, 2012 meeting; seconded by Etscheidt. Motion approved. Motion by Hays to approve the minutes of the April 12, 2012 meeting; seconded by Etscheidt. Motion approved.

Licari thanked Council members, Clayton and Nelson in particular, for the excellent Annual Graduate Faculty Meeting last week. He added that suggestions made at the meeting were fantastic and could serve as a positive springboard for improving graduate education at UNI. He looks forward to working with everyone in order to promote graduate education. Licari also thanked those who served on the panel. He felt that the panel promoted a good environment for feedback from the audience. He concluded to say that we need to make sure the university is reaching out to the community.

Coon mentioned that Graduate Student Commencement is Friday, May 4 at 7:00 p.m. The Graduate College wanted to do something special for graduate students, so each graduate will be presented with a white carnation as they come off the stage; approximately 300 students are planning on attending the commencement ceremony.

Coon is proceeding with student requests for spring graduates. She said that some students tend to think that the request has to be completed by commencement even though the degree does not go on by commencement or within the week after.

Coon informed Council members that she had some sad news, in that Chris Bauman, who is a member of the Council passed away this morning. Chris had battled breast cancer for the last several years and lost that battle.

Nelson also thanked the panel members who served at the graduate faculty meeting; Susan Etscheidt, Helen Harton and Carol Weisenberger. She felt that each panelist represented their programs, as well as graduate education in general at UNI, very well. She noted that the Council's intent was for the panel to address Goal 2 of the strategic plan related to promoting graduate education, primarily in this instance, to internal constituencies. She said it was obvious that it was a worthwhile effort and the panel spurred good audience participation.

Nelson said that one of the positive things that came out of the panel discussion was that Provost Gibson indicated she would like to meet with the Graduate Council at least once each semester in the same way she meets with the faculty senate. This would be something the Council would want to address early in the fall and again in the

spring. Nelson added that she felt this would be very positive step forward and that Provost Gibson had a good opportunity to hear some very positive aspects of graduate education at UNI. Nelson thanked everyone on the Council for the work they have done.

Analysis of Student Evaluation of Teaching Data

Clayton explained that in 4000/5000 level classes that have both undergraduate and graduate students in them, undergraduate and graduate students are given different evaluation forms, which is different than in the past. Currently, the data is being analyzed separately, so the faculty member who teaches the class gets two evaluations at the end of the semester. If there are only one or two students of a given rank in the class, it is quite possible the student would no longer be anonymous. If they were the only respondent, that would especially be a problem. She added that the evaluation form states that it is anonymous, but in practice it is not. Both undergraduate and graduate students could be affected by this issue. Clayton said she had been informed by Coon that there is a way the University can administer the evaluation and analyze the data differently by combining the sections into a 9000-level section for purposes of evaluation and then the data could be reviewed. Clayton opened up discussion as to whether or not the Council would like to address this issue.

There was a comment that currently the numbering system is driving the way the evaluation process works, which is unfortunate. It was noted that a lot of the comments graduate and undergraduate students would have about an instructor would probably be similar, so it doesn't make sense to break out the 5000-level respondents. This would be especially important in relation to compromising anonymity; promising students anonymity and not delivering would be unethical. Iqbal added that students used to have the option of not filling the circle where it designates them as graduate or undergraduate, but now there is no choice. Coon pointed out that the situation is also an issue in any cross-listed class; classes with different subject areas that are sitting together in the same room. Nelson said there is a workaround and the Council would need to make sure it is implemented.

Since Botzum is a graduate student, Clayton asked her thoughts on the process. Botzum responded that since she is the only graduate student in the tuba program and the only one with that course number, it is obvious who is filling out the evaluation. She mentioned that she has talked to her friends and they say the evaluation is not anonymous.

Etscheidt said this is a pretty significant problem in her area, because there are a lot of people who are seeking endorsements at a post-BA level, so it would be very typical to have 30 students at the undergraduate level and then the work is differentiated for the graduate students in those courses. Oftentimes there would be one or maybe two separate evaluations and so the students are easy to identify. She said that they would really prefer that some action be taken regarding this issue. Clayton responded that faculty may continue to have a relationship with the student outside that classroom and so she feels like the student should be able to comment on a particular faculty member without compromising their relationship with the instructor. Etscheidt said that typically their secretary will take the evaluation results and do a narrative of all the comments

that are made. Etscheidt wondered if there would be a way to not have to go to a separate course number, somehow the data could be collected, combined, and presented as it used to be. Coon responded that she was at a meeting roughly a year ago that dealt with various administrative issues related to cross-listed courses since they are handled slightly differently in the system. The 4000/5000 level issue was a particularly thorny issue, because it is a lot different than the old system; having two different course numbers for the same course for undergraduate and graduate students. One problem was the logistics in administering the evaluation in class and making sure undergraduates got their form and the graduates got their form since they literally came in two separate envelopes. Graduate students were to fill out the form with the 5000 on it and the undergraduates filled out the other form. This was obviously a problem because if there are equal numbers, it is a logistical nightmare as to who is handed the form when you're the person administering the evaluation. At the time, it was acknowledged that anonymity would be a problem. Coon was informed that a "dummy" 9000-level course would be the combination of those two course numbers (e.g. course 4234 and 5234 would be combined as 9234, just for the evaluation). Forms would all come in one packet with every student filling out the same form and the results analyzed together. She said it sounded good and she was surprised to hear in the fall that it did not happen and then it did not happen in the spring. Hays noted he felt this is not just a technical issue; when doing any type of research and data gathering you need to clearly communicate how it is going to be used.

Hays made a motion that due to serious ethical concerns about anonymity of responses, the Graduate Council requests that data collection and reporting be combined for Student Assessments of Teaching for crosslisted undergraduate/graduate courses (3000/5000 and 4000/5000); seconded by Husband. Motion passed unanimously.

Nelson noted that the Council's decision needs to be communicated by someone with authority.

Report on President Allen's Five Year Review

Clayton introduced Gene Lutz, who is a member of the Presidential Review Committee. Clayton distributed copies of the review materials for the Council's reference. Nelson mentioned that the review is available on the faculty senate website. Nelson pointed out that the review is a faculty senate process that has been in place since 1976, so the process was not initiated as a reaction to anything in particular. The review was intended to be every five years, but due to numerous circumstances, one of which was his illness President Allen's review was not done last year. Nelson added that it is not known to what extent the actual results are influenced by more current events that have occurred this year, although that certainly had some potential. The survey actually closed a day ahead of when the lab school announcement came out, but there certainly was information already out there that these things were being considered, so it wasn't as if people were not aware of the potential for cuts and that the lab school may possibly be closed. The impact that those events may have had on the survey are unknown. Nelson said that the review

committee tried to avoid being too interpretive and just present the content by way of a summary as to what faculty indicated on the survey; they tried not to interpret too strongly one way or the other, but just presented the data. This information was contained in the faculty summary in Table 2 of the report.

In keeping with the previous reports a lot of detail is not presented in the report, although it is actually more detailed than prior reports. Nelson noted that the participation rate mirrored the faculty demographics reasonably closely. In looking at the charts there were a few places where things were off just a little bit, but it was a pretty representative sampling, even though only 35% of the voting faculty chose to participate. This figure is actually in keeping with prior surveys of this type that have been done. Nelson opened up a question and answer session by noting the Gene Lutz is the person that would best be able to answer procedural questions; Lutz pulled the survey together, got it on MyUNiverse and handled the data.

A question was asked regarding President Koob's last evaluation and how it compared. Clayton responded that Koob's review was the year before he left. Nelson said the presidential review committee had a copy of Koob's information to look at. She said his ratings were very favorable, both from the point of view of the faculty and the senior administrators who were involved. Clayton said that once again, a major issue mentioned was communication. Nelson added that Lutz had participated in several of the presidential reviews and he has said that communication generally comes out of every one of these. Clayton commented that in terms of the instrument itself, it was used as a starting point. The instrument is similar, but there are differences; the biggest difference for this survey is that it was conducted online.

Lutz informed the Council that he was on the faculty senate in 1976 when the senate asserted its right to conduct a review. He did not know the exact circumstances that prompted the review, but it has been the prerogative and practice of the faculty senate to conduct a review every five years. Clayton noted that the language related to reviews also mentions other senior administrators may be reviewed every five years and gave the example of Aaron Podolefsky's review when he served as provost.

There was a question as to where the report goes from this point. Nelson said she could answer that to some degree; obviously, the report as well as more of the data went to President Allen. This occurred before the faculty senate meeting. Nelson added that the report will be transmitted to the Board of Regents by Jeff Funderburk as chair of the faculty senate, since it is a faculty senate process. Clayton noted that the reason the report was posted on the faculty senate website was to make it accessible to everyone on campus and it will remain there. Nelson mentioned that one idea that came out was to stream video of certain meetings that President Allen is involved in that currently have only the PowerPoint presentation available, such as the University Council Meetings. Nelson said that it has always been the prerogative of the president to decide how to respond to the feedback. She commented that the president may choose to respond with a letter to the campus. The review committee had indicated that this is what had been done in the past.

There was a question as to whether the open-ended questions were summarized or provided as raw comments. Nelson responded that the open-ended questions are still being processed and that it was Lutz's feeling that the responses would have more impact if President Allen received the direct comments so that he could see how frequently something might actually appear in the comments. Funderburk had expressed a concern that there were a few comments that he felt could possibly identify people, so he wanted to remove those. Clayton said the idea was to go through and make sure that everyone's confidentiality was maintained. Clayton said most of the questions were policy and leadership questions and the team combed through the data to help determine overall feelings of strengths and weaknesses and to pull out the constructive suggestions to share with the president. Lutz stated that he thought it to be only fair as well as informative that President Allen sees the comments except in cases where it would identify someone.

After additional conversation related to issues such as the functionality of the instrument itself, the length of time the survey was posted, demographics, what faculty groups have access to the survey, and how to make faculty more aware of the survey, Clayton thanked Lutz for all his hard work on the review process.

Clayton thanked Nelson for her service as Chair of the Graduate Faculty. Nelson thanked Clayton as well. Since Botzum will be graduating, Clayton thanked her for her service and told her she had done a fantastic job in representing graduate students. Clayton also noted that Etscheidt had reached the end of her term and said she very much appreciated all of her hard work and willingness to serve on numerous committees over the years. Clayton concluded by saying it had really been a pleasure to work with Chris Bauman. Council members thanked Clayton for her service as Chair of the Graduate Council.

The meeting ended at 4:31 p.m.

The next meeting will take place on Thursday, September 13, 2012 at 3:30 p.m. in Lang 115.

Respectfully submitted,

Cheryl Nedrow
Secretary