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University of Northern Iowa Graduate Council Minutes, April 12, 2012

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UNI Graduate Council Minutes #1013

April 12, 2012

Present: Bartlett, Botzum, Caswell, Clayton, Coon, Hays, Husband, Iqbal, Pohl

Absent: Bauman, Etscheidt, Licari, Nelson, Power, Schuchart, Waldron

Guest: Susie Schwieger, Director of Graduate Student Life

The meeting was called to order by Chair Clayton.

On behalf of Licari, Coon reported that assistantship offers are being processed. There was a question as to when assistantship offers might go out. Coon said timing related to the assistantships was not ideal in all respects and at this point she did not have an estimated date that offers would be going out. She noted that paperwork would be processed in the order it was received and added that summer tuition scholarships needed to go out first; those had gone out on Friday, April 6.

Coon also reported that over 300 students had applied for spring graduation, with approximately 300 indicating that they would be attending commencement. It was noted that graduate students would have a separate commencement ceremony on Friday, May 4 at 7:00 p.m.

Regarding the second student request workshop, Coon said there was good attendance and both workshops seemed to be helpful. She had several people tell her they learned information that would help them better assist their students.

Schwieger thanked everyone for participating in the Graduate Student Research Symposium and added that next year's symposium will take place on Thursday, April 4. The Graduate Student Information Meeting will be held on August 22 of this year with the time to be determined. Thinking About Graduate School (TAGS) for undergraduates, will be held on October 9, 2012 with the time to be determined.

Schwieger is in the process of updating the online Graduate Student Orientation and suggested that Council members review the site when they have a chance in order to make suggestions on how to improve the site.

On behalf of Nelson, Clayton said that the last brown bag lecture of the year, which was presented by Chris Buckholz, was one of the best she had seen in recent years. The discussion was good and she learned a lot about changing trends in the music world, primarily due to the internet.

Clayton noted that the President's University Council is basically a mechanism for the delivery of information to a larger group of people at the University. Nelson represents the graduate faculty at that meeting and she wanted to let the Council know that the presentations from those meetings are archived and available on the president's website.

Clayton reminded everyone that next Friday, April 20, is the Annual Graduate Faculty Meeting. Graduate students and faculty award recipients will be announced and a panel discussion on graduate education will take place.

Clayton noted that the Council usually doesn't meet after the Annual Graduate Faculty Meeting; however, a meeting has been scheduled for April 26. This meeting will be used to present the results of President Allen's five-year review. The results will be presented to the Faculty Senate on Monday of that week. There was a question as to whether or not faculty are the only group represented in the review. Clayton responded that in this particular case yes, because the process was established in 1976 by the Faculty Senate as a faculty-driven process. This would not exclude other groups on campus from having their own process if they wish to do so. Clayton clarified that the input on the review was predominantly input from faculty; there was a chance for the voting faculty to respond to an electronic survey and members of the Cabinet were interviewed with not all members of the cabinet being faculty. Clayton added that the process was handled in the most transparent way possible. The review will be read into the Faculty Senate minutes and will be posted on its website.

Implementation of the Graduate Education Strategic Plan

Clayton said that after consultation with Nelson, it was decided to take some time to look more into the implementation of the strategic plan. The intention has been to have small groups meet to work on implementation; however, with everyone's schedules it has very been difficult to find a time for everyone to meet.

Regarding the next step forward in the implementation of the strategic plan, Clayton said her personal opinion regarding moving forward is that being able to articulate the importance of graduate education at UNI is perhaps the most pressing step. She said that some people on campus don't value graduate education, but among those who do, reasons for valuing graduate education can vary. The question would be how to turn the assortment of reasons into a marketable, clear, concise message.

It was mentioned that with programs being cut, it is hard to be enthusiastic in promoting the strategic plan. Clayton added that with 1/4 to 1/3 of the graduate programs having been eliminated, there is a question as to what this means for those graduate programs that still exist and for graduate education at UNI. She added that it certainly would have been possible to make a clear statement that graduate education at UNI wasn't valued by eliminating all of the graduate programs, as that could have been an option in these budget times. Since that did not happen, it can only be assumed that graduate education is part of the goals of the University's strategic plan and in a general sense, graduate education is still valued at UNI. Clayton added that the term she hears most is "selected programs" remain. Schwieger asked what type of investment would there be into the "selected programs" for further growth. There was also a question as to whether additional funding would be provided to these remaining programs.

Hays mentioned that in the feedback received during the Graduate Education Strategic Plan process, graduate education is being viewed as something that primarily serves the goals and purposes of a Research One institution. He added that if someone has a doctorate, generally they got it at a Research One institution and they understand how doctoral programs fit into the goals of research and scholarship of discovery at a Research One institution. He also thought that viewing graduate education at a comprehensive university with the same frame of reference as graduate education at a PhD granting, Research One institution would be unfair and inaccurate. He said most, but not all of our graduate programs are providing students with advanced training for

professional roles that they want to assume in the work place; the liberal arts programs also eventually plug into that. He added that he felt the mission of graduate education at UNI is really to provide students with opportunities for advanced training in a variety of professional roles that they will assume in their lives. That is really what most of our programs do in one way or another.

Hays said that even in programs focused on Liberal Arts, students may be preparing to teach in a certain area and some of these programs have doctoral platforms, although some of the programs that have tried to serve only as doctoral platforms are now gone. Hays continued that emphasizing graduate education and providing the professional training opportunities are what is needed. He added that even though we are primarily an undergraduate institution, education should be looked at in a 5-6 year time frame and not just in a 4-year frame because we're getting cut off at the entry level; fewer and fewer students enter as freshman. By being able to say UNI can provide students with a complete 4-year education and can also provide students with some opportunities to pursue in order to get more advanced training. Hays said he believes that is the kind of focus that UNI's graduate education has to have, because it is not being used to support massive research operations like it does at Iowa or Iowa State.

Pohl said that in considering the Graduate Education Strategic Plan from another viewpoint, the Council needs to look at the plan and then highlight the strengths and the benefits our graduate programs provide for students. Once this information is pulled together, directed messages that emphasize those benefits and strengths should be crafted and sent to current and prospective students, as well as faculty; this effort will bring in those students and also it will hopefully bring in the resources. She said the benefits and strengths are in each Council member, in current students, and in the curriculum, but a lot of people don't know it out there. We need to look at the strategic plan and craft the message and make sure everyone inside and outside the University knows it.

Schwieger noted that another target audience would be employers, as they are probably not in the know as to what programs are staying and the caliber of those programs. Hays added that part of the message has to be that there are distinct advantages to pursuing a master's degree at an institution like UNI. He came from a Ph.D. program where a master's was considered a punishment and basically you got a master's because you couldn't cut it in the Ph.D. program, but his MPP students here are valued as master's students. It was mentioned that master's students are valued here and not considered second to Ph.D. students; classes are relatively small which allows for individualized attention; courses are strong, rigorous and faculty teaching the courses are accessible.

Since most of the members of the Council that were present are in practitioner-based programs, Clayton wanted to make sure that everyone had a chance to speak. She asked if there were different points of view that would say that the Council maybe should not be focused in the practitioner-based direction. Coon mentioned there is the type of graduate education that has the generation of new knowledge as its focus; more of the Liberal Arts programs, which she believed were some of the hardest hit with the program cuts. She said there are still a few programs at UNI where research and writing of a thesis which is an original contribution to the literature is a key feature of the

degree. This would be something else that could be articulated about the role of graduate education. Coon said that if programs go all the way over to being practitioner based and faculty just pass on their knowledge to the next generation, then who will be the faculty of the next generation? She felt that in moving forward it would be beneficial to keep in mind that there are programs that are more research based.

In additional discussion, Husband said that the three end goals for the Liberal Art MA students really blend together and she would be hard pressed in any given year to give the actual distribution of who goes on for a PhD program since this changes from year to year. She noted that at least one-third of our students go directly into teaching at the community college level; one-third of students go into editing so there is an application from going to creative writing to editing; one-third go on to PhD or MFA programs in creative writing. Husband concluded by saying she would not want to suggest that we are vocationally oriented in our graduate programs because she thinks it is important to let students weave their way through and make those decisions and even the terminal goal of the thesis can be something someone finds applicable to their teaching career if that is the next step after the MA. So the end goals are not determinants of how people define themselves after their MA. Hays commented that his definition of professional is not in terms of getting a particular degree to do a particular thing, but enhancing students' opportunities to take on a variety of professional roles. Bartlett said that although her program is a professional program where students are going for a license in two specific areas, she felt that the Council has to be strategic, as the name of the plan states and needs to figure out how to creatively set UNI apart as graduate programs using the unique program features that can be pulled together.

Husband noted that Celeste Bemby in CHAS is working on a promotional video or slideshow for prospective students regarding what graduate students are going on to do after they earn their degrees.

Clayton said that it is obviously important to focus on strengths moving forward, but it is also very important to bring people together and to not isolate groups into people who are training students for professional credentials and people who might define themselves more in the Liberal Arts. Yet another group would be those that find themselves in both directions. She said she thought it would be important to find something that everyone sees themselves in and not isolate or leave groups of people, programs and students out. Clayton said that personally, that has always been a challenge because the types of programs here at UNI are different from each other; they have different goals and types of students.

In addition to strengths that had already been discussed (Master's students are valued, relatively small programs, more individualized, rigorous), Clayton asked for any other common strengths in programs that should be marketed. Community engagement, service learning, and the opportunity to research and publish with faculty were mentioned. Husband mentioned that the work Schwieger does with the symposium is one of the kinds of opportunities that are usually reserved for doctoral students and that the interdisciplinary nature of the symposium is very unusual. She added that this is a real advantage for students in that they can present alongside other graduate students in other disciplines and see that there are other ways to do it than reading a 20 minute paper at a conference. Coon mentioned that she had heard from doctoral coordinators

who said that doctoral programs have felt like they are an afterthought at UNI (much the same way Master's programs feel at R1 institutions), so she thinks the Council will want to be careful to make these strengths inclusive of doctoral programs

After additional discussion, Clayton noted that finding a handful of attributes that would apply to all of graduate education at UNI that everyone can see themselves in, that are positive messages to send forward would be a really important task that she and Nelson are hoping to address in the coming year. She added that one of the concerns that Licari had as the strategic plan was being crafted was that being very cognizant of what the Graduate College can and can't do is very important. The Graduate College is not going to micromanage individual programs, but what the Graduate College as an entity can do and what can be done at the Graduate Council level to promote programs can be considered. This overall promotion of both the Masters and Doctoral programs, as well as promoting the idea of pursuing graduate education at UNI would also be important. Schwieger added that a lot of people have been reading the Courier, the Register and other sources of information and they may think there are no graduate programs left at UNI. She added that it is incumbent upon all of us to get the message out. A discussion regarding how other universities are marketing their programs took place, including printed brochures and various items that are given away at career fairs. It was also mentioned that having prospective students register to win a larger prize might be a better way to draw them to UNI's information table. Schwieger also mentioned that this year was the first time students would fill out contact cards and she would enter them into Admissions' system and then copy the coordinator on the e-mail correspondence that was sent.

It was agreed that Pohl and Clayton will work together to develop a draft of steps to use to move forward and bring the draft to the Council for feedback.

Clayton suggested that as Council members interact with other graduate faculty, they need to spread the word that these steps are something the Council is working on and make notes to bring back. Clayton said that any comments and notes would be kept in a central location. She concluded by saying it is a difficult time right now, so it is important to be sensitive, but at some point there is no other choice than to move forward with a united front to improve the situation and yet make sure everyone's voice is heard.

Clayton reminded everyone of the Annual Graduate Faculty Meeting coming up next Friday and asked Council members to encourage colleagues to come in order to support students and faculty.

The meeting ended at 4:31 p.m.

The next meeting will take place on Thursday, April 26, 2012 at 3:30 p.m. in Lang 115.

Respectfully submitted,

Cheryl Nedrow
Secretary