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University of Northern Iowa Graduate Council Minutes, November 11, 2010

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UNI Grad Council Minutes #997

UNI Graduate Council Minutes No. 997

November 11, 2010

Present: Bauman, Clayton, Czarnetzki, Hays, Hood, Husband, Licari, Matvienko, Pohl, Schneider, Schuchart, Wurtz.

Guests: Schwieger.

The meeting was called to order by Clayton. Clayton announced that the minutes of the October 28th meeting were not yet available for approval.

Licari stated that the HLC review team recommended reaccreditation without follow-ups or focus visits. The chair of the team indicated that this result was due, in part, to UNI's decision to join the HLC assessment academy (otherwise, a focus visit might have been required relating to student outcomes assessment in the liberal arts core and in graduate programs. The first roundtable for the assessment academy is next week and, following this initial meeting, the core group will be expanded to include a member of the graduate faculty. Discussion ensued on the reason for the review team's critique of graduate SOA. The general consensus is that graduate SOA (in aggregate) is lagging behind undergraduate SOA and is uneven across programs. Licari concluded that strengthening graduate SOA is an opportunity for graduate programs to better demonstrate their adherence to the strategic plan emphasis on rigor and relevance.

On behalf of Waldron, Clayton said that approximately a dozen students participated in the open forum for graduate strategic planning yesterday. The students were enthusiastic about improving graduate education at UNI and the emerging themes basically paralleled those from the faculty and staff open forum. Work on the strategic plan continues; the committee meets every other week.

Clayton presented two language options for the council to consider regarding the TOEFL/IELTS waiver. The first option was prepared as a result of the previous council meeting and is based on language used by the University of Iowa. The language reads:

"Scores on the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) or the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) are required from applicants whose first language is not English. The minimum required scores are 550(paper)/213(computer)/79-80(Internet) on the TOEFL or 6.5 on the IELTS. Please note that some graduate programs have higher requirements. The requirement to submit these scores may be waived at the discretion of a graduate program in the following circumstances only:

- * the student has completed a bachelor's degree at an accredited university in the U.S.;
- * the student has an equivalent degree from an accredited university in Australia, Canada (excluding French speaking institutions), Ireland, New Zealand, or the United Kingdom."

Clayton stated that Coon had circulated this language to all graduate coordinators after the last council meeting, and feedback was received from approximately 20 people (some of whom serve as coordinator for more than one graduate program). Approximately half of the respondents had waived the TOEFL in the past (generally rarely). Approximately half of the respondents approved this language; the other half preferred a bit more flexibility (for example, included graduates from any English speaking institution). As a result of these data, Coon developed a second option. The language reads:

"Scores on the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) or the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) are required from applicants whose first language is not English. The minimum required scores are 550(paper)/213(computer)/79-80(Internet) on the TOEFL or 6.5 on the IELTS.

Please note that some graduate programs have higher requirements. The requirement to submit these scores may be waived only by the Graduate College through a direct request from a graduate program (not from a prospective student). A typical circumstance in which a waiver may be granted is that the student has completed a bachelor's or graduate degree at an accredited English-speaking institution."

Clayton stated that this second option preserves the discretion of the graduate program while providing the greater flexibility favored by many graduate coordinators. It also provides some oversight, which will result in more consistent application of the policy and a means of tracking the results. Hays thought that the rules should be clearer. Bauman stated that she preferred option 2 as it would provide more rigor and allow us to learn from past decisions. Matvienko asked whether the department would provide evidence or justification to the Graduate College. Licari responded that yes, that would be the case, and that the admission form would need to be modified to allow room for that evidence. Czarnetzki asked whether there was a major difference in option 1 vs 2, as the Graduate College signs off on admission in all cases. Licari replied that it would primarily be a procedural difference, as now there is no place for graduate programs to provide evidence or justification.

Motion to approve option 2 by Pohl. Second by Bauman. Motion approved. Hays asked that Coon discuss this policy change with Linda Jernigan to make sure that the policy was clear to International Admissions. Licari indicated that he would ask Coon to do so.

Hays asked that, in the future, we consider a mechanism to allow international students take CIEP at the beginning of their graduate programs. Clayton and Licari note noted that there had been discussion with Kristi Marchesani (at Graduate Council and with Licari), and there were no data available on the outcome of CIEP – do graduate students who have completed this program succeed? Licari indicated that he was uncomfortable moving forward without this outcomes data.

Clayton distributed a document from Coon relating to current policies on allowed transfer credit and double counting and asked that the council review this material before the next meeting on December 9th.
Meeting adjourned at approximately 4:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Maureen Clayton
Chair, Graduate Council