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University of Northern Iowa Graduate Council Minutes, September 25, 2003

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UNI Graduate Council Minutes #927

September 25, 2003

Present: Deb Gallagher, Kristen Mack, Richard Utz, Gayle Pohl, Ben Schafer, Kim MacLin, K.N. Rajendran, Lauren Nelson, Cynthia Coulter, Sue Joslyn.

Visitors: Dixon Stuelke, Sue Pettit, Philip East

Ex-Officio: John Somervill, David Walker, Jackie McGlade.

1. Minutes #926 of the Graduate Council meeting September 11, 2003

One change in minutes recommended by Chair MacLin: correct spelling of “legally” in last sentence of minutes. Rajendran motioned to accept amended minutes, Coulter seconded, motion passed unanimously.

2. Election of Secretary:

Joslyn was self-nominated. Shafer motioned to accept nomination, Nelson seconded, motion passed unanimously.

3. Graduate Dean’s Report:

Dean Somervill: no announcements

Associate Dean Walker:

- The Graduate Council needs to nominate college representatives to serve on Graduate College awards committees for Outstanding Doctoral Dissertation, Outstanding Masters’ Thesis, and Outstanding Creative Masters’ Thesis.
- Coulter and Rajendran volunteered to serve as voting members of the Distinguished Scholar Award. October 13 is the deadline for submitting materials for the award.
- Pohl volunteered to serve a three year term as the Graduate Council representative for the Faculty Strategic Planning Committee (function of the committee: Collect and generate proposals for University strategic plan, report to the faculty senate).

Associate Dean McGlade:

- Schedule for Graduate Curriculum Committee has been distributed.

4. Announcements:

Chair MacLin reminded Council members to provide her with the name of a proxy if the elected member is unable to attend council meetings.

Dixon Stuelke: asked to be re-appointed to the Council until the next masters' representative is determined. He didn't realize he was serving on the Council for only one year. Dean Somervill indicated that most Master's students are not available for more than one year, but that the process to place a new student on the Council takes some time. XXX motioned to accept Stuelke as the masters representative until the new representative is seated, Nelson seconded, motion passed unanimously.

5. Computer Science Proposal

The Computer Science Department proposed two related changes in their graduate program. Both changes relate to a rule that limits the amount of graded research that can be included in non-thesis programs of study.

Nelson asked if the proposal should be reviewed first by the Graduate Curriculum Committee, then forwarded on to the Graduate Council. East indicated the Curriculum Committee is quite busy at this time, and the proposal deals with a policy decision, not a curricular issue. He thought it would be helpful to get the proposal approved in a timely fashion. Utz suggested sending consultation forms to Department Heads and Departmental Graduate Coordinators. Nelson suggested also sending a consultation form to the Graduate Curriculum Committee. McGlade indicated that the Graduate curriculum Committee can do policy decisions such as the proposed changes simultaneously with deciding curriculum issues, and that it is the information-gathering body that makes policy decisions. MacLin suggested sending a consultation form to the Graduate Curriculum Committee to leave a paper trail of actions. Rajendran asked who in the University is affected by the proposed changes. East responded that possibly no one or possibly all graduate programs are affected, but that there is no paper trail on any previous action for this particular policy. Utz motioned to send consultation forms to department heads, department graduate coordinators, and the Graduate Curriculum Committee. Nelson seconded. Discussion: Graduate Council should appoint someone to devise a consultation form that Dorothy can circulate, describe exactly what the council is requesting. If the proposed changes are enacted, they may have a cascading effect and will have to be included in all University packets that currently have research hours restrictions. Somervill reminded the Council to allow everyone adequate time to respond to consultation forms, and to include clear deadlines on the document. Walker indicated a reasonable deadline would be 30 days from receipt of the form (although the curriculum packet comes up on October 8, curriculum can be sent in as late as the end of fall semester). Somervill recommended to note who is consulted, what was the response, and don't assume that no response means no concerns. It will be important to make a second contact attempt prior to the stated deadline, and to make the Faculty Senate aware of what steps were taken. Include regular consultation form choices of "proposal has an impact – we object," "proposal has an impact – we do not object," "proposal has no impact – we object," and "proposal has no impact – we do not object." MacLin agreed to draft the form. Motion passed unanimously.

6. Faculty Regent Award

Schafer volunteered to serve as Graduate Council representative on the Faculty Regent Award Committee, whose goal is to select up to six faculty who exhibit excellence in teaching, research, and service at UNI.

7. Comprehensive Exam Guidelines

Somervill explained that there is no consistency whether departments have/don't have written guidelines for the comprehensive exams. Concern has been raised regarding student access to results/feedback as to why the student failed/passed/conditionally passed. Creating guidelines are at the discretion of each department, although the Graduate Council could provide recommendations on common elements to include in each departments' guidelines, such as clear expectations on how to take the exam, how is feedback provided to student, etc., so that students know what to expect. Utz and McGlade suggested elements to include such as criteria for exams, how the exam is evaluated, policies related to portions of the exam the student can see, and what they can see in their student files. Departments can have restrictive policies on proprietary information, including restrictions on photocopying exams. Somervill reminded the Council that legal issues exist with regards to proprietary information, describing to what extent students have access to their own files. Policies can not violate rights of the students, and the Council needs to know these rights before making recommendations. Utz stated that such a policy is very helpful when a grievance is filed. Nelson suggested having a subgroup of the Graduate Curriculum Committee or Graduate Council draft guidelines, evaluate the guidelines with respect to legal issues, and present to the Graduate Council to accept or reject. McGlade offered to poll departments to find out current policies, and bring the information to the next Graduate Council meeting. Somervill suggested forming an ad hoc committee of the Graduate Council to develop these guidelines, send the draft to Phil Patton and Tim McKenna for comments regarding legal/proprietary issues, then have the Graduate Council vote on the final draft. Departments can decide individually what they will do. Stuelke asked who advocates for the student in a grievance situation. Somervill replied that the graduate college advises students on the process, explains steps, deadlines, and sits as objectively as possible. McGlade added that the Graduate College acts in the Ombudsman role, and can often mediate informal resolutions to the grievance.

8. Non-Degree Suspension/Probation

McGlade met with the Registrar's office to develop a letter for graduate students who are non-degree status. The normal process to address students who fall and stay below standards is to first receive a warning, secondly the student is put on probation, and finally the student is suspended. Non-degree students did not have this tracking, but do now. Students who have less than 7 credit hours and less than 3.0 GPA will receive a warning letter. If the student goes over 7 hours with less than 3.0 GPA, the student will be put on probation. The system excludes students whose grades are not yet in (e.g., "Incomplete"). Letters will be generated from the mainframe computer automatically. Somervill added that since non-degree students are advised by the Graduate College, the grading policy for non-degree students should come from the Graduate Council.

9. Items for Publication: none

10. Other Business: none

The meeting of the UNI Graduate Council was adjourned at 4:44 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Sue A. Joslyn, Ph.D.