

2-13-2003

University of Northern Iowa Graduate Council Minutes, February 13, 2003

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Recommended Citation

University of Northern Iowa. Graduate Council, "University of Northern Iowa Graduate Council Minutes, February 13, 2003" (2003). *Graduate Council Documents*. 152.

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UNI Graduate College Minutes #922

February 13, 2003

Present: Fogarty, Gallagher, Granberg-Rademacker, Jepsen, MacLin, Meier, Rajendran, Safford, Somerville, Stuelke, Utz, Villavicencio, Walker

Absent: Bozylinsky, Coulter, Hanson, Pohl, Schafer

Visitors: Barb Hetrick (Biology), Phil Patton (Registrar), Sue Pettit (graduate student), Pam MacKay (Registrar)

Meier moved, and Utz seconded a motion to accept minutes #921. The minutes were approved.

Walker began the meeting by thanking those Graduate Council members who helped recruit one or more volunteers to serve on the Outstanding Graduate Faculty Teaching Award committee.

Fogarty began discussion on the first agenda item, Grade Point Average requirements for non-degree graduate students. He explained that this issue was raised during previous Council meetings, and that the argument against a GPA requirement typically revolved around the idea that non-degree students were not considered serious students, and they may have been taking courses more for personal enjoyment than to ultimately enter a degree program.

Without specific reasons to change the existing policy (no GPA requirements for non-degree graduate students), the Council had previously decided not to add requirements. Fogarty introduced Dr. Barbara Hetrick, head of the Biology department, to discuss her stance on this issue.

Hetrick explained that, without a minimum GPA requirement, some non-degree students had decided to continue taking courses in her department despite failing multiple courses, and being advised not to continue. Her concerns also focused on the extra time these students require of faculty. Hetrick further explained that in light of the non-degree standards at the other Regent's institutions, and given the current budget situation, these students should not be allowed to continue on what appears to be unsuccessful tracks. Fogarty cited an example of a student who began as a non-degree student, who eventually was admitted fully into the program, and who went on to complete a Ph.D. Somerville noted that generally there are two types of students who enter as non-degree: those who have no intention to get a degree, and thus are unconcerned about grades, and those who use non-degree status in hopes of eventually entering a degree program. He explained that the other Regent's institutions generally held a minimum GPA, and offered a shorter period of non-degree status. When the Graduate Council addressed non-degree requirements before, the general consensus was that this was not much of an issue.

Patton explained that the primary concern from his office was that undergraduates with deficient GPA's would be subject to probation or suspension. Non-degree graduate students, on the other hand, would not.

Somervill explained an alternative to a non-degree GPA policy would be that departments prevent students from taking their courses by explaining that they need departmental permission in the catalog. Stuelke suggested that a time limit on faculty guidance to non-degree students be placed in the departmental description in the catalog so that potential grievances are avoided. Gallagher noted that faculty do not have an obligation to accommodate non-degree students.

Discussion ensued about a potential time period that non-degree students be allowed to prove themselves. Somervill explained that currently students cannot apply anything beyond 12 hours of non-degree credit to their programs. Further discussion revolved around when the implementation date for new non-degree policy would go into effect. Several potential motions were discussed, involving a minimum GPA requirement, a GPA-deficiency scale, and a limit on the number of hours non-degree students can take before achieving the minimum GPA. Somervill reminded the Council that students still had the option to take audit courses or to take them for credit/no credit. Gallagher explained that some non-degree students may be returning for certification courses. Further discussion occurred about regulations associated with certification.

Utz suggested considering how Iowa and Iowa State regulate non-degree students. Discussion ensued about the required GPA's and limitations on the number of credit hours taken. Patton explained a prospective deficiency model, where the required GPA would be in relation to the number of credit hours taken. Discussion proceeded about the number of hours that a non-degree student could pursue before reaching a proposed minimum GPA, and when a proposed policy would go into effect.

Somervill explained the current provisions for suspension to be lifted, and that students' situations are dealt with on a case-by-case basis. Patton told the Council that the deficiency model would allow the minimum GPA to change, based on the number of credit hours that a non-degree student had attempted. Discussion followed about whether or not to consider the deficiency model, or to simply set a 3.0 GPA requirement for 9 attempted hours.

Rajendran explained his concern about setting a higher standard for non-degree students than degree-seeking students. Somervill suggested that the Registrar had heard the Council's concerns, and thus he could come to the next Council meeting to present specific language to be considered in addressing this issue. He reiterated that the Council seemed to agree that non-degree students be limited to a maximum of 9 hours attempted, with a minimum 3.0 GPA, and suggested that an implementation date be added to any drafted motions. Patton agreed to provide several examples with different deficiency scales.

Fogarty suggested that agenda items 3B (evaluation of graduate transfer work) and 4 (representation of the Graduate College and Council at graduation) wait until the following meeting.

Granberg-Rademacker announced the implementation of a new mailserv that will allow messages to go to all graduate students' UNI email accounts. Students may unsubscribe or change their email addresses, as they deem appropriate. Any messages to be sent to this group should be sent to Granberg-Rademacker, or Mary Ann Hesse in the Graduate College. Discussion revolved around setting up a similar mailserv for Graduate Faculty, and the challenges presented by this.

Stuelke explained that this new mailserv would be beneficial but still would cause difficulty in his ability to directly consult with his constituents. Further discussion ensued about the possibility of dividing the mailserv into two distinct groups: one exclusively for master's students, and the other for doctoral students. This would be a challenge because of it would require manual entry of students' information. Villavicencio explained that his concerns revolved around specifically consulting with his constituency (doctoral students), and the availability of the mailserv option for graduate assistants teaching courses. Further discussion involved ITS's policies and procedures in setting up these mailserves. Utz suggested that changes in policy would have to occur within ITS. Somervill suggested that ITS may have difficulty establishing mailserves for graduate teaching assistants largely because they are not listed in the schedule, and thus it is difficult to verify their teaching assignments. He suggested that Stuelke and Villavicencio visit with Granberg-Rademacker about possibilities with the graduate student mailserv.

The meeting adjourned at 5:10 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Sara Granberg-Rademacker
Program Assistant