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University of Northern Iowa Graduate Council Minutes, February 10, 1994

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UNI Graduate Council Minutes #827

February 10, 1994

Present: Chao, Crew, Durham, Gaies, Huddleston, V. Jackson, Kirmani, Lew, MacArthur, R. Martin, Safford, Simet, Somervill, Walker

Absent: Decker, Yohe

Visitors: Nancy Marlin (Vice President and Provost); Susann Doody (College of Education); John Fecik, E. A. Dennis (Industrial Technology)

Minutes #826 were approved as published.

Somervill will be presenting updates and changes in the Graduate College's Strategic Plan to the UNI Strategic Planning Committee. Somervill announced that the Enhancement Committee has completed its deliberations and reported to him. As stated at the beginning of the deliberations, Somervill said he would accept the Committee's recommendations. The Committee's decisions are not going to be publicized until all departments seeking enhancement have been notified. There were 23 programs which applied for the five year enhancement. They each had to provide specific information. The three programs chosen will each receive three additional assistantships. It was noted that five of the nine assistantships were new assistantships given at the end of last year. Somervill will be meeting with the head and dean for each program to outline expectations for excelling as a result of the enhancement. Somervill thanked the Committee for its diligent work and extensive involvement during the process of selection. The Committee consisted of Ira Simet (Chair of the Graduate Council), Sharon Huddleston (Vice Chair of the Graduate Council), Norris Durham (Chair of the Graduate Faculty), and Barbara Lounsberry (Chair of the University Senate).

Jackson distributed copies of the revised graduate academic grievance policy and form and asked Council members to review these to ensure that all changes were incorporated.

Simet noted that the catalog states that all master's degree students on either the thesis or non-thesis plan are required to complete a comprehensive examination, but some departments are not adhering to this. Some departments are using the thesis defense in place of the comprehensive examination. Somervill has asked for a discussion on whether to delete the requirement from the catalog. Jackson said that the Graduate College is working with the Registrar's office to make sure that requirements in the catalog are clear and are being enforced. MacArthur moved to strike the statement from the catalog. Motion was seconded. Jackson said that if it were deleted as a general requirement, departments would have to indicate in the catalog if the comprehensive examination was required. Simet questioned whether requiring a comprehensive exam would reflect on the quality of a program. Gaies said that just because the requirement

is not being enforced is no reason to eliminate the requirement. He said that comprehensive exams serve an important role in programs by trying to maintain quality. Students have to demonstrate knowledge of the entire area and that they have synthesized what they have learned during their courses. Crew said that he believed each program did what it felt was appropriate for that program. Huddleston said that the thesis defense and the comprehensive exam serve different purposes: the thesis is an in-depth study of a narrow topic and the defense tests the student's knowledge in that area, whereas the comprehensive exam tests a student's breadth of knowledge. Therefore she feels that the requirement should be retained and enforced. MacArthur said that he felt each department should have the freedom of choice. Doody said that what is meant by a comprehensive examination should be defined. After more discussion, Huddleston moved to table the motion so that Council members could solicit input from departments and graduate coordinators. Motion to table was seconded and passed.

Somervill said that he had called the Graduate Dean at each of the benchmark institutions requesting information on the structure and policy for their Graduate Faculty. There was no consensus among the institutions. Somervill said that he has frequently been asked by outside reviewers why there is no distinct designation for faculty eligible to chair doctoral dissertations. Their assumption is that this is an indication of low program quality. Somervill said that he favors a two level Graduate Faculty: the first eligible to chair master's theses and the second eligible to chair doctoral dissertations after demonstrating a record of scholarly activity over time. Other questions which have been raised include whether there is a review after a period of time or if once you obtain Graduate Faculty status you have it for life. Simet said that departments which have doctoral degrees should maintain the quality of dissertation chairs because it is hard to evaluate scholarly activity in other areas. Simet will appoint a committee consisting of one person from each doctoral program and one from the Council to decide whether to pursue the issue of a multi-level Graduate Faculty, the issues to be discussed and the main themes to be considered. Crew volunteered to serve on the committee.

Simet announced that the instrument to evaluate the Graduate Dean will be distributed next week. There is a short time frame for return and he hopes that faculty will complete it right away.

Items to be publicized include the request for input on the comprehensive examination question.

Martin moved to adjourn. Motion was seconded and passed. Meeting adjourned at 4:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Ann Hesse
Secretary

Next meeting will be February 24 at 3:30 p.m. in Seerley 3