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University of Northern Iowa Graduate Council Minutes, September 22, 2016

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UNI Graduate Council Minutes #1057

UNI Graduate Council Meeting

September 22, 2016

Present: Al-Mabuk, Beall, Berendzen, Calderon, Cutter, Dhanwada, Edmister, Igou, Juby, Pohl, and Rod-Welch.

Absent: Fontana, Isakson, Ostapyuk, Ross, Schwieger, and Teske

Chair Pohl called the meeting to order at 3:30 p.m.

Welcome: Presidential Search Co-Chairs: Regent Mulholland and Dr. Dan Powers

Regent Mulholland and **Dr. Powers** were invited to answer questions regarding the Presidential Search process. **Mulholland** reported that meetings were held on campus through the summer and into the first weeks of the Fall semester. Feedback was collected from the UNI community as to what characteristics were important for the next President. Comments were collected and compiled from over 400 individuals. The full Search Committee first met on August 29 to formally receive the charge for helping to select the 11th President of UNI. The comments from the listening sessions were compiled along with the input from different groups within campus. Based on these results, a small working group put together the description for the new President. The ad was submitted to the Chronicle of Higher Education on September 12; the print version of the ad is scheduled to come out on September 23. The same ad was also sent to a number of other online job sites and organizations. The application deadline is October 19. The Committee will meet again on October 26 to review and discuss applicants. They are hoping to select 6-8 candidates from the pool for further consideration. **Powers** added that the university community is welcome to nominate people for the position through the search website. There will be offsite interviews for the selected candidates. . The goal will be to narrow the list down to 3 or 4 candidates and bring them to campus for a visit. The details of the candidates will be disclosed to the UNI community 24 hours before they come to campus. The campus visits are currently planned for November 29th, 30th and December 1st. A one-day visit is being planned including an open forum for students, faculty and staff to meet with them and ask questions.

Powers assured the Graduate Council that the search process is so far going as planned. **Dhanwada** (a member of the Presidential Search Committee) informed the Graduate Council that the visit day is currently being planned to allow the candidates to have adequate time to see the campus and visit different groups representing administrators, faculty, staff and students. The Graduate Council members were also informed that while the Search Committee has to follow specific rules to meet open meetings laws. The Search Committee will receive feedback from all groups before presenting their recommendations to the Board of Regents on December 5th. The BOR will then interview all 3 (or 4) candidates with the same set of questions on Dec 6th to select the best candidate for the position.

Graduate College Reports:

There was a motion to approve the minutes of the Sept 8 meeting. The motion passed.

Cutter discussed the status of TAGS (Thinking About Graduate School). All undergraduate students who are interested in attending graduate school are welcome to attend the TAGS event scheduled on Tuesday, September 27 in Maucker Union Ballroom from 3:30 to 4:45 p.m. There will be a faculty panel to talk about various issues relating to the graduate school experience and available programs. The panel will consist of 4 faculty members from different areas of expertise. Also, there will be a presentation on what students need to know about applying to graduate school and another on how to prepare for the GRE. This is a once-a-year event, done every fall. The event is generally well attended and the students find it very useful.

Cutter also elaborated on the faculty petition discussed during the last Graduate Council meeting. It was proposed that the members of the faculty be allowed to raise their graduate education-related issues directly with the Graduate Council. Cutter informed the group that materials in this regard are soon to be uploaded to the Graduate College website. Once the site is ready, an announcement will be sent out to the UNI community about its existence. It is expected that the faculty will find it helpful to bring up their issues for resolution. Suggestions are welcome to improve the actual mechanism of such a petition.

Chair Pohl talked about the Brown Bag Lectures that have taken place in the last two weeks; those given by Rick Seeley from ITS. She asked everyone to encourage students and faculty to attend the upcoming lectures. There is a lot to learn from the lectures and also it is important that the attendance be improved.

New Business

“What are the characteristics of a successful graduate program?”

Discussion occurred with regard to the expected characteristics of a strong graduate program. The members of the Graduate Council were asked to brainstorm to provide ideas on the following questions:

- **What are the important characteristics should we expect for the current graduate programs at UNI?**
- **What should be the ideal size of a graduate program for it to be successful?**
- **Should UNI be limiting enrolment in our graduate curriculum?**

It was noted that a very important characteristic of a strong graduate program is the level of funding that is available to the program. Students also need a strong introduction to the services of the Library. Help was needed by students to make sure they knew how to get the needed information at the Library. Students don't necessarily

know what resources are available to them and they are sometimes afraid to ask important questions. Also, a good graduate program should prepare the students in finding jobs. Looking for jobs is a whole different world so it would be important for our graduate students to develop professional skills.

One common theme was repeated: there needed to be adequate funding for graduate research. It was suggested that funding for Master's programs and Doctoral programs should be looked at to ensure that Masters students were being adequately funded. Graduate programs should also make sure that research money is fairly distributed so that both Master's and Doctoral projects are adequately covered. This is particularly urgent since many graduate programs at UNI only offer M.A/M.S. as their terminal degrees. On the other hand, it was acknowledged that every program may not be treated equally because the nature of the disciplines is different, such as those in the sciences versus the ones in humanities. Some programs require more resources than others, which needs to be considered during funding decisions.

Recruitment was **another important characteristic of a strong graduate program**. Individual programs must take the lead on this particular aspect since they know their prospective students. Various ways and means for recruitment should be designed by the programs offering the degrees. The Graduate College was willing to help to help departments. Incentives must be considered as an important aspect of recruitment. Competitive funding for strong students was once again mentioned as to how a program can become strong. It was noted that sometimes programs are unable to accept really good students only because we do not have the adequate level of funding. Increasing funding levels would go a long way to avoid such situations. Current criteria identified for admission include a B.A or B.S. degree of incoming students and a minimum score in TOEFL for international students. Additional requirements must be determined by the individual programs.

Discussion occurred on the expected size of a program. There was agreement that a single, set number of students for all programs or classes would be difficult to achieve. Some disciplines traditionally have low numbers of students, for others, numbers are higher as the program addresses a specific national need or is an applied or practitioner program. It was noted that it is important for the Graduate College to ensure that individual programs are making every effort to create a community of scholars within their programs. Some programs find it difficult to provide multiple scholarly activities due to small number of faculty. It was also pointed out that some programs don't offer classes that they need to offer. In this situation, the question was asked if it would be fair to fund them when they are not offering enough classes to be full-time and to maintain a scholarship.

There was also a discussion on how to develop the program's curriculum so that a sufficient number of students are there to fill the courses that could be offered. Some UNI programs have done really well in incorporating the practitioner components into their degrees. For applied tracks, specifically those that have a clinical focus, numbers need to be small. In this case, how should we think about class size? It

was pointed out that for professional and applied programs, sometimes a broad curriculum vs. an in-depth one is usually needed and thus larger class sizes are appropriate; it is harder for clinical or lab intensive program. Students want to go into very different careers. In those kinds of situations, we need to accommodate more electives in the curriculum. Some of it could be achieved by incorporating portions of the curriculum from other graduate programs. Thus, care should be taken in designing a program curriculum that can meet the needs of a variety of students.

Graduate Council members agreed that faculty involvement in the graduate programs was key and should be another characteristic of a successful graduate program. It should be kept in mind that if the majority of faculty from the department are not actively participating (having students, serving on graduate committees) in the program, it is important to have someone spread the work. In this situation, programs should take a look at their curriculum.

Another suggestion was that there should be some professional development or training for thesis Chairs; Dhanwada noted that the Graduate College would be willing help this idea move forward. Also, at the time of admission, it may be important to determine a faculty advisor for a thesis-based degree so when a student comes into the program, one wouldn't want that student to not have a faculty member to supervise his or her research.

Adequate funding for travel was identified as another characteristic of a good graduate program. Dhanwada noted at this time the Graduate College does not have the budget for travel funds. Several members noted that this is unfortunate because we expect our graduate students to go to professional conferences to present their research work. Conference presentations can make the Graduate College look stronger and more attractive to prospective students. Also, it goes a long way toward professional development of graduate students. We need to think about where we can obtain those funds. One source may be the UNI Foundation. Graduate Council members agreed that we should be reaching out to our alumni in this regard and encourage them to give back to their institution.

Meeting adjourned. The next meeting will be on Thursday, October 13, 2016.

Respectfully submitted,

Rubina Chowdhury
Secretary