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## Graduate Council Minutes 2012-12-03

Northern Illinois University

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Minutes Approved at the 606<sup>th</sup> Meeting – February 4, 2013

GRADUATE COUNCIL MINUTES

605<sup>th</sup> Meeting  
December 3, 2012

MEMBERS PRESENT: Abdel-Motaleb, Anekwe, Arado, Bennardo, Bond, Bruce, Chown, Garver, Gowen, Hathaway, L'Allier, Levin, Osorio, Rosalez, Rossetti, Shin, Sims, Sunderlin, Umoren, Wilkins, Zhou

MEMBERS ABSENT: Buras, Efanov, Schraufnagel, Sido, Van Laarhoven

GUEST: Doris Macdonald (HLC Steering Committee Chair)

OTHERS PRESENT: Hughes (Secretary), Smith (Catalog Editor/Curriculum Coordinator)

Bond called the meeting to order at 10:04 a.m.

Approval of Minutes

Bruce moved approval of the November 5, 2012 minutes; Gowen seconded the motion. Rossetti noted that her name was misspelled in one section and missing from the list of members present at the meeting. With these corrections, the Council unanimously approved the minutes.

Committee Reports

**Colloquium Committee:** Bond reported that Janet Hathaway volunteered to chair the committee. There were forty-eight proposals for the spring 2013 semester, all of which were funded. Hathaway commented that there is still money to entertain late proposals for spring and asked members to share that information with departments. Bond stated that guidelines have been established to assist departments with honorarium issues for guest speakers who are not U.S. citizens because there are government restrictions on payments to non-immigrants and non-citizens based on their visa type.

**Curriculum Committee:** Chown presented the November 12 and November 19, 2012 minutes for approval. The committee reviewed and approved minor curriculum changes. Hathaway informed members that there was a discrepancy on the submissions from the School of Music. The on-line version was correct, while the print version was missing a line with regard to electives. She requested that the line be inserted in the print version. Bruce commented that there was a productive discussion between the Departments of Literacy Education and English regarding a new course. Levin stated that the department signed-off on the course and urged their colleagues in the College of Education to be generous in sending forward non-duplications. Bruce moved approval of the minutes with the minor correction; Wilkins seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

(Curriculum Committee minutes and catalog changes are available at:  
<http://www.niu.edu/provost/curriculum/committeeminutes.shtml>.)

**Standards Committee:** Bond indicated that the Office of the Provost would soon be contacting those members of the Graduate Council and the Undergraduate Coordinating Council who agreed to serve on the ad hoc committee to reconcile the syllabus policy to schedule the first meeting. Graduate Council members on this committee are: Hathaway, Rosalez, and Schraufnagel.

Bond reported on a proposed change under “General Regulations/Academic Standing” in the *Graduate Catalog* with regard to C- grades and academic dismissals. Under the new grading system, a grade of C- is deficient and, therefore, has been added to the list of grades that constitute automatic academic dismissal if 6 or more hours are accumulated. Bond indicated that the Standards Committee agreed to add it to the list for a matter of consistency, but did not feel strongly about the change either way. Levin moved approval of the proposed change; Gowen seconded the motion. There was an extensive discussion.

Graduate Council members considered consistency, as well as the ramifications of the proposed change. Some members felt strongly that a C- grade carrying a grade point of 1.67 should be included in the list of deficient grades that result in academic dismissal at 6 hours of accumulation, while others felt equally strong that it was too harsh for a C- grade and should not be included. Sims suggested that, if approved, there would need to be communication with faculty about the effects of a C- grade. Wilkins agreed that faculty would need to be educated on the issue.

Bruce called the question. Members asked for clarification of the motion. Bond stated that the motion was to approve the change to include the C- with the list of deficient grades that result in automatic academic dismissal at 6 hours of accumulation. Bond asked for a vote by show of hands. **The motion passed 10:9.** (See attached document.)

Bond stated that the change would take effect in fall 2013. He informed members that he would provide data at the next meeting in February to show the number of C- grades assigned this fall.

#### Announcements

**HLC Accreditation Review Self-Study:** Doris Macdonald, coordinator for the HLC 2014 reaccreditation process, gave a presentation that provided members with an overview of the process. Macdonald informed members that, this year, the institution asked for a substantive change to move from one HLC category to another called “Delivery of On-line Programs.” NIU is currently in tier one, which means fewer than 5% of programs are offered on-line. By the time the site visit is done in 2014, NIU will be in tier two, which means between 5-20% of programs are offered on-line.

Macdonald stated that there are five criterion that are evaluated: 1) Mission; 2) Integrity, Ethical, and Responsible Conduct; 3) Teaching and Learning: Quality, Resources, and Support; 4) Teaching and Learning: Evaluation and Improvement; and 5) Resources,

Planning, and Institutional Effectiveness. She noted that the Board of Trustees approved a new mission statement last spring.

Macdonald stated that the Steering Committee is currently gathering information for the self-study, which will continue through the fall 2013 semester. The Steering Committee is composed of representatives from each college, the Provost's Office, and Faculty Development. There are various subcommittees charged with gathering data, finding evidence, and interpreting it for possible inclusion in the self-study. Macdonald noted that there are several Graduate Council members serving on these subcommittees and thanked them for their service. She added that Brad Bond, Beth Tolle, and Promod Vohra are all HLC peer evaluators who have provided helpful information on what to expect in this process.

Macdonald informed members that the self-study report will be available on-line in August, 2013 for comment and review. The final report will be submitted to the HLC at the end of the fall 2013 semester, and the site visit will take place on March 3-5, 2014. She asked that people please respond to information requests, encourage participation, and spread the word. For more information or to view the PowerPoint presentation, visit [www.niu.edu/hlc](http://www.niu.edu/hlc). Any questions or comments can be emailed to [hlc2014@niu.edu](mailto:hlc2014@niu.edu) or directly to a Steering Committee member.

Wilkins took the opportunity to thank Macdonald for taking on this arduous task. Her sentiment was shared by all.

### New Business

***Assistantship Stipend Limits for AY 2013-14*** Bond reported that the ad hoc committee on Graduate Assistantship and Tuition Waiver Policies has been meeting since January. He stated that the committee was charged with two tasks: 1) to ensure that what we do with tuition waivers for graduate assistants is reasonable and sustainable from the point of view of the institution; and 2) to ensure that graduate assistants are paid an attractive and competitive stipend on which they can actually live.

Bond referred to a draft memo that was distributed to members prior to the meeting. It reflected a 2.5% increase in the minimum stipend, which is \$212.50 semi-monthly for a half-time appointment. That would be clearing about \$160 semi-monthly. In the past, the Graduate Council has set the minimum/maximum stipend based on historic data taking into consideration the Cost of Living Index or the Consumer Price Index. Bond suggested that Graduate Council might want to consider setting the minima in a different way by asking the fundamental question of what does it take for a graduate student to actually live on what we pay. He receives complaints from students who are clearing \$140 semi-monthly for teaching one or two classes, and he is unable to justify that. Bond commented that the traditional memo is historic in nature and does not take into account the realities for graduate students. Bond suggested that Graduate Council consider raising the half-time minimum to at least \$250 semi-monthly, which would increase the full-time minimum to \$500.

Sims stated that the International Student and Faculty Office states on its website that it costs approximately \$25K per year for a student to live in DeKalb and attend NIU. L'Allier asked if there were any state university comparisons for GA stipends. Bond responded that state institutions are not necessarily a good comparison group. He informed members that over the past two years in the fall semester the Graduate School surveyed students who were admitted but did not attend. The primary question was where they ended up going. Bond indicated that we have lost more students to UNC-Charlotte and SUNY-Buffalo than we have to any single state institution in Illinois.

L'Allier stated that there is a limited budget that cannot simply be raised to meet all of the needs. Garver commented that the stipends not only have to cover the cost of living for graduate students, but also the very high fees they have to pay. She suggested that Graduate Council should consider that for the long term. Bruce stated that fees are approximately \$100 per credit hour. Bond added that it rounded out to about \$1,200 per semester for 9 hours with health insurance.

Hathaway commented that graduate students are surprised when they come here and find out about the high fees they have to pay. She stated that the issue is significant enough that it needed to be addressed in some way. Bond agreed and indicated that there was nothing to prohibit a department from doing that.

Bruce suggested that Graduate Council look into the impact the proposed increase would have on the number of assistantships available before voting. He asked if there was one large financial pool for assistantships. Bond replied that colleges and hiring units have control over their own assistantship budgets.

Gowen stated that most GAs in his college have a second job. He asked what percentage of GAs were paid the minimum in each college. Bond stated that he briefly reviewed data that would suggest there are approximately 174 heads paid less than the proposed \$250 for a half-time appointment. Bond indicated heads because there are people who are listed twice in the data that may be paid the minimum from one budget and the minimum from another budget. He estimated that the number would probably drop down to around 120 or so. Most of those graduate assistants seem to be from support units, not from academic units. The one exception would be in the College of Business because they tend to have more students in the minimum stipend category.

Bruce commented that his only concern was the impact that the increase would have on the number of assistantships available. He stated that he would like to obtain that information from his college before voting. Wilkins asked how grants factored into graduate assistantships because some colleges and departments have many grants, while others do not. Bond stated that they tend to be clustered in the sciences, but there are not as many soft-funded graduate assistants as one might imagine. Sims indicated that roughly 10% of the assistantships in Biological Sciences are paid from grants and the stipend amounts for research assistants are generally the same as those for teaching assistants. Umoren stated that her concern was the department's budget. If the Graduate Council sets a higher minimum and the department cannot afford it, then it means fewer graduate assistantships and fewer tuition waivers for students.

Bond indicated that he would provide more data. Wilkins requested data that shows the percentage of graduate assistantships that are paid from soft money compared to the overall number of assistantships. In addition, she would like to see data reflecting the stipends of half-, three-quarter-, and full-time assistantships with the escalation of fees over the past 5 years. Gowen requested data on what percentage of graduate assistants are paid the minimum in each college for half-, three-quarter-, and full-time appointments.

The minimum stipend issue was tabled pending receipt of more data. Members will also discuss with their respective departments and colleges.

***Tuition Waivers:*** Bond stated that in April of 2012 the General Assembly repealed General Assembly tuition waivers. It was a long-standing piece of legislation that allowed representatives and senators to award tuition waivers to students. When that legislation was struck, there was an amendment that called for the creation of a task force to study the way public institutions award tuition waivers. Bond informed members that in advance of the April legislation, NIU had begun examining practices associated with the award of graduate tuition waivers.

President Peters and Provost Alden had previously charged a working group to examine the institution's policies and procedures related to award of tuition waivers. The objective of the group was to ensure sustainability and to ensure that competition for the awards was transparent and open. The president and provost asked specifically that there be some limits placed on the awards in the various categories of waivers that are awarded, that the purpose of the various programs be very explicit and related to the public agenda for higher education and to the university's mission, and, when possible, that there be a centralized competition for awards. Last week, the President approved a series of changes to those waivers programs that are not affiliated with graduate assistantships. Those waivers include Recruitment, Minority, McNair, Fellowships, and Institutional Grants and Contracts. Effectively, for Recruitment, Under-Represented Minority, and McNair tuition waivers, there will be a centralized competition. The Graduate School will soon distribute information about the operation of the new processes. Some details were provided members.

Sims noted that, currently, Recruitment tuition waivers are distributed in numbers to departments based on graduation rates and asked if that was going away. Bond replied that Recruitment waivers would be awarded through a centralized competition. Sims asked what the deadlines would be for the centralized competitions for Recruitment and Minority tuition waivers. Bond replied that it would be soon, mid-February or early-March for the first set of deadlines. There was recognition that departments use those very proactively when they do not have assistantship dollars for highly qualified students, so the initial deadline was set fairly early. Bond indicated that one of the issues that still needs to be worked out is how to communicate this information with students. Sims indicated that his department's deadline for fall admission decisions is February 15, which will likely conflict with the Graduate School deadline. Bond responded that his department has a fairly early deadline. Bond stated that the initial deadline would be mid-February or early-March, and that there would be another round for the fall semester with a mid-summer deadline to try to accommodate as many approaches to admissions as possible. Bond stated that there will be more detailed information forthcoming. Graduate

Council is one of the first groups to hear about these changes. Again, Bond reminded members that it will only affect those tuition waivers not affiliated with graduate assistantships or employment categories.

Meeting adjourned at 11:40 a.m.

## General Regulations

A graduate-level student who has accumulated 6 or more semester hours of grades of C- D, F, U, or WF in graduate course work at NIU will be academically dismissed from the Graduate School, regardless of the student's GPA. If a course is repeated, whether under the special repeat option or otherwise, the grades in both attempts will be considered in determining whether this 6- semester-hour total has been reached.

## Grading System

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The [Graduate School](#) grading system applies to all graduate students taking courses for graduate credit.

The graduate grade point average (GPA) is computed by dividing the total number of grade points earned by the total number of credit hours that a student has taken in NIU courses earning grade points. In no case are NIU courses taken for undergraduate or law credit or transfer courses included in the computation of the graduate GPA. Grades and their grade point values are as follows.

<b>Grades Earning Graduate Credit</b>	<b>Level of Performance</b>	<b>Grade Points Per Semester Hour</b>
A	Superior	4.00
A-		3.67
B+	Satisfactory	3.33
B		3.00
B-	Marginal	2.67
C+		2.33
C		2.00
S	Satisfactory for courses graded S/U	-

<b>Grades Not Earning Graduate Credit</b>	<b>Level of Performance</b>	<b>Grade Points Per Semester Hour</b>
C-	Deficient	1.67
D		1.00
F	Seriously deficient	0.00
U	Unsatisfactory for courses graded S/U	0.00

Other transcript entries, with their definition, include the following.

- I—Incomplete (see also following section on “Incompletes”)
- IP—In Progress
- WP—Passing at time of withdrawal
- WF—Failing at time of withdrawal
- O—Audit; no grade and no credit



Students doing less than satisfactory work will be assigned the grade of C-, D, F, or U. Graduate credit is given only for those courses in which a grade of S, or C or better, is earned. A grade of S indicates that the student has performed at a level equivalent to at least a B.

***Justification:*** Adding "C-" to the list of deficient grades (receipt of 6 hours of which leads to dismissal) aligns the list with the general understanding of the C- grade.