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Graduate Council Minutes 2015-11-02

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Minutes Approved at the 625th Meeting – December 7, 2015

GRADUATE COUNCIL MINUTES
624th Meeting
November 2, 2015

MEMBERS PRESENT: Arado, Ayres, Bond, Clark Bremer, Gowen, Hathaway, Hoffman, Howell, Jaffee, James, Levin, Lukaszuk, Majumdar, Mantzke, McGuire, Menezes, Polala, Porter, Smith, Stoddard, Van Wienen, Yang

MEMBERS ABSENT: Armstrong, Bostwick, Osorio, Sims, Wilkins

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

Bond called the meeting to order at 10:07 a.m.

Approval of Minutes

Gowen moved approval of the September 14, 2015, minutes; Levin seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

Committee Reports

Graduate Council Curriculum Committee: Howell reviewed the minutes of the October 12, 2015, meeting for approval. He stated that there were numerous revisions and new courses approved by the committee, but no substantial policy changes to report. Howell referred to a discussion about plagiarism software at the meeting. He indicated that Bostwick had suggested discussing with Graduate Council the possibility of centrally purchasing plagiarism software for theses and dissertations. Bond stated that he listed the idea as a walk-on agenda item for discussion later in the meeting. Mantzke moved approval of the minutes; Stoddard seconded the motion, which carried unanimously. (Curriculum Committee minutes and catalog changes are available at: http://www.niu.edu/u_council/committees/minutes/gccc/index.shtml.)

Graduate Council Standards Committee: Bond reported on the September 21, 2015, meeting. He reviewed proposed changes to Section IV, “Graduate Assistantship Policies and Procedures,” in the Academic Policies and Procedures Manual. The majority of the revisions reflect recent changes prompted by the Affordable Care Act and NIU’s need to respond to it. Bond noted one other significant change, which regards graduate assistants and summer enrollment. Specifically, graduate assistants on payroll during the spring semester do not have to enroll during the summer term immediately following in order to maintain their graduate assistant status. Howell moved approval of the revisions; James seconded the motion, which carried unanimously. The proposed changes will be forwarded to the APPM Advisory Committee. (See attached document.)
**Graduate Faculty Membership Committee:** Bond reported on the September 30, 2015, meeting. The committee reviewed the Department of Economics’ revised criteria for graduate faculty membership. Economics uses a point system for publications and, based on feedback from external reviewers, has taken steps to relax publication requirements slightly to reflect current standards in the profession. The revised criteria include a reduction in the required number of points for full (150 to 100) and senior (250 to 200) graduate faculty status. There are no other changes to the document. The Department of Economics provided significant justification for relaxing the publication point requirement and shared with the committee relevant sections of its policy manual. Committee members unanimously approved the proposed revisions. Levin moved approval of the revised criteria; Hoffman seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

**University Fellowship Committee:** Bond reported on the October 26, 2015, meeting. The committee reviewed nominations and selected winners for the thesis and dissertation competitions. The Outstanding Dissertation Award, which comes with a $750 cash prize, will be awarded to Stephen Cole from the Department of Physics. Three students are receiving the Outstanding Thesis Award, which comes with a $500 cash prize: Eden Anderson from the Department of Psychology, Alex Haberlie from the Department of Geography, and Disa Patel from the School of Nursing and Health Studies. The students will be recognized at the Outstanding Graduate Student Recognition Reception next semester. He acknowledged and thanked members of the University Fellowship Committee--James Burton, Kyu Taek Cho, Sean Farrell, Janet Hathaway, Judith Lukaszuk, James McGuire, Nestor Osorio, and Thomas Smith.

**New Business**

**Plagiarism Software:** Bond asked Howell to introduce the topic. Howell explained that there was a discussion at the Curriculum Committee meeting about the need for centralized plagiarism software or some other method of checking for plagiarism in theses and dissertations. He indicated that Bostwick had suggested having a conversation with Graduate Council about the topic. Bond was open to a discussion at Graduate Council, but indicated that normal protocol would be to take it to the Standards Committee first. He asked members for their thoughts on whether there was a significant problem with plagiarism as well as on acquiring the software. Bond was asked if purchasing such software had ever been discussed in the Graduate School. Bond stated that he had spoken with Carolyn Law, the Graduate School dissertation advisor, about it over the summer. He indicated that some software produces many false positive results and that using it could be a cumbersome process. Many Graduate Council members felt that quality control should be the responsibility of the thesis/dissertation committee and, ultimately, the advisor. Others felt that centralized plagiarism software might be useful as a preliminary screening method. Levin suggested writing a local definition of plagiarism and creating a document for students to sign at the defense. Bond acknowledged the notion of a declaration of the work’s originality. He commented that he would consider all the magnificent ideas coming from Graduate Council and indicated that he would take the topic to the next Standards Committee meeting for further discussion.

Meeting adjourned at 10:31 a.m.