Graduate Council Minutes 2016-12-05

Northern Illinois University
Minutes Approved via Email – January 2017

GRADUATE COUNCIL MINUTES
631st Meeting
December 5, 2016

MEMBERS PRESENT: Arado, Barnes, Beyer, Bond, Clark Bremer, Collins, Gowen, Howell, Jones, Kortegast, Luginbill, Majumdar, Olson, Osorio, Silver, Smith, Van Wienen, Weier, Wilkins

MEMBERS ABSENT: Diccar, Gaillard, Gallaher, Hoffman, James, Mantzke, Nimbekar, Polansky

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

Bond called the meeting to order at 10:05 a.m.

Approval of Minutes

Gowen moved approval of the November 7, 2016, minutes; Osorio seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

Committee Reports

Graduate Council Curriculum Committee: Howell reviewed the minutes of the November 14, 2016, meeting. He noted there were 123 pages of minutes and expressed certainty that members had reviewed all the materials prior to the meeting. Howell stated that the committee approved numerous revisions and new courses, including reorganization changes in the College of Education and the College of Health and Human Sciences. He indicated that the majority of the meeting was spent discussing a proposed specialization in art museum studies for the M.A. in Art. There were concerns about duplication with the Certificate of Graduate Studies in Museum Studies. Faculty from both areas were present at the meeting to discuss the various issues. Howell indicated that the conversation was productive, but the item was tabled for revisions based on further discussions between the interested parties. Both parties agreed to try to make changes prior to the next GCCC meeting. Howell noted the importance of reaching out to programs, especially interdisciplinary programs, to ensure non-duplication. Wilkins moved approval of the minutes; Van Wienen 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.)

Honorary Degree Committee: Bond briefly reported on the November 7, 2016, meeting. The committee reviewed four nominations for honorary degrees. Two nominations were supported and forwarded to the President for consideration by the Board of Trustees. Names of nominees cannot be made public until they are approved. Bond explained that the President will meet with the Board of Trustees in private to discuss the two nominees. If approved, the two individuals will be contacted to confirm acceptance. If accepted, the
Board of Trustees will make a public announcement. Bond acknowledged members of the Honorary Degree Committee: Greg Beyer, Daniel Boutin, Damian Fernandez, Charles Gowen, Pradip Majumdar, and Beth Wilkins. He thanked members for their efforts on this committee.

New Business

**Graduate Assistantship Minimum Stipends for FY 18:** Bond reviewed a draft memo reflecting a 1.5% increase in the minimum graduate assistantship stipend amounts for academic year 2017-2018. Wilkins moved acceptance of the memo; Howell seconded the motion. Discussion ensued.

Kortegast suggested that the lack of competitiveness of NIU’s graduate assistantship packages, which include stipends and tuition waivers, may be the result of high fees and high health insurance rather than low stipends. Bond acknowledged the issues and referenced the Program Prioritization progress reports that were recently released. He suggested that members review the Academic Affairs report on GA stipends, specifically page 9 of the document. Bond stated there is recognition that we need more competitive stipends, including packages, because it impacts recruitment and retention, as well as the graduate student experience. The document also states that, in early spring, various administrators and representatives of the Graduate Council and Human Resource Services will compile options that will be presented to the Senior Cabinet and other administrative committees for consideration.

Jones asked if the stipend memo could change between now and the fall semester as a result of Program Prioritization. Bond indicated that it could change, but it would depend on the timeline of the process. He explained that the memo needed to go out sooner rather than later because departments typically begin hiring GAs in February. Bond reminded members that this memo only reflects the minimum stipend, which affects approximately 200 graduate assistants. He stated that the stipend did not increase at all last year.

Wilkins suggested that there needs to be a good, strong voice from the Graduate Council when that group convenes to bring forth all the concerns of the students and the whole notion of being competitive. Members agreed and further discussed some of the major financial concerns of NIU graduate students:

- Low GA Stipends
- High Fees (Unused Resources/Different for Grads; Transparency/Breakdown)
- High Medical Insurance
- Differential Tuition Costs
- Early Bills (Before GA Tuition Waiver Is Applied and Before Receiving Stipend)
- High Late Fees (Bill Must Be <$500 in Order to Register for Following Term)

Collins asked if a grant could cover both tuition and fees. Bond responded that it could if the grant funding agency allowed. Jones added that the stipend could be increased to help, if not allowed.
Bond reminded members that there was a motion and a second to accept the memo and asked members to vote. The minimum GA stipend memo was unanimously approved. (See attached.)

**Announcements**

**Distinguished Graduate Faculty Award:** Bond informed members that the committee charged with reviewing the eleven nominations for this new award that recognizes graduate faculty for excellence in graduate mentoring and outstanding scholarly achievement met on November 9, 2016, to select the winners. Dr. Walker Ashley of the Department of Geography and Dr. Mark Frank of the Department of Geology and Environmental Geosciences were selected as the inaugural recipients of the Distinguished Graduate Faculty Award. They will each receive $2,000 and be recognized at the graduate commencement ceremony on Saturday, December 10, at 2:00 p.m. Bond told members to read the nice article the *NIU Today* posted this morning about the award and the two impressive recipients.

Meeting adjourned at 10:42 a.m.
December 5, 2016

MEMORANDUM

TO: Offices That Appoint Graduate Assistants

FROM: Bradley G. Bond, Dean of the Graduate School and Associate Vice President for Graduate Studies

RE: Graduate Assistantship (GA) Stipends for AY 18 (2017-18)

The Graduate Council has approved a resolution mandating that the minimum stipend amounts be increased by either the federal Consumer Price Index or the amount of increase granted faculty salaries, whichever is higher (i.e., 1.5%). The Graduate Council further resolved that departments shall determine their own individual maximum amounts. Departments may set stipends at any rate above the established minimum.

The following minimum stipend amounts will be effective for assistantship (teaching, research, and staff) appointments beginning between August 16, 2017 and August 15, 2018.

GRADUATE ASSISTANTSHIP STIPENDS
Fall 2017 through Summer 2018

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<tr>
<td>Official University Minimum:</td>
<td>$444</td>
<td>$333</td>
<td>$222</td>
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Also, please be reminded that applicable Board and University policies preclude a graduate assistant from working more than 20 hours per week.

cc: Vice Presidents
    Council of Deans
    Associate Deans
    Graduate Council
    Sponsored Programs Administration
    Graduate Assistantship Employment, HRS