Minutes Approved at the 594th Meeting – April 4, 2011

GRADUATE COUNCIL MINUTES
593rd Meeting
March 7, 2011

MEMBERS PRESENT: Arado, Bennardo, Bond, Chown, Eckdahl, Evans, Frank, Freeman, Gowen, Hathaway, Holt, Kim, Konen, Macdonald, Niemi, Osorio, Smith, Sunderlin, Umoren, Walker, Zittel

MEMBERS ABSENT: Barnes, Battula, Johnson, Liu, Menke, Sagarin, Von Hagel

OTHERS PRESENT: Schmidt (Leadership, Educational Psychology & Foundations), Smith (Catalog Editor/Curriculum Coordinator), Wright (Secretary)

Bennardo, Assistant Chair of the Graduate Council, called the meeting to order at 10 a.m. He stated that Freeman would be running late from the Senior Cabinet and he started the meeting.

Approval of Minutes

Zittel moved approval of the December 6, 2010 minutes; Gowen seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

Committee Reports

Curriculum Committee: Umoren presented the March 2, 2011 special electronic meeting minutes for approval. She stated that there were only a couple of items that were voted on, including changing a Chemistry seminar course from ½ credit to a full credit and changing the EdD in Educational Psychology to a PhD. The coursework for the PhD was already approved during the last academic year.

Smith moved approval, Holt seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved. The following course revision in the catalog copy was approved:

COLLEGE OF LIBERAL ARTS AND SCIENCES
Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry
CHEM 615 (course revision)

New Business

Assistantship Stipend Limits for Fiscal Year 2011-2012: Wright stated that the Graduate Council approves increasing the minimum graduate assistant stipend by the faculty salary increase or the Consumer Price Index (CPI). In order to align with the faculty salary increase in January 2011, the suggested raise for the minimum stipend for graduate student assistantships was 2.5%. Eckdahl moved approval, Macdonald and Zittel seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved.
Announcements

Registration for Graduate Student Research Conference: Smith announced that students and faculty can register for the Graduate Student Research Conference online at [www.niu.edu/GSRA](http://www.niu.edu/GSRA). The Conference is on March 26, 2011 and begins at 8 a.m. with a breakfast talk presented by Freeman. There will be a poster fair and there are 31 posters that will be on display. There are five paper sessions throughout the day and a workshop for Graduate Students on grant writing presented by the Office of Sponsored Projects. Dr. Dan Gebo, BoT Professor and Distinguished Research and Teaching Professor, will be the keynote speaker. The first 100 registrants will receive free lunch.

RFP for Graduate Assistantships: Bond stated that two Request for Proposals (RFP) recently went out for Graduate Assistantships. Members should have received the RFPs. These are new assistantships that are offered through the Strategic Planning process. One requires a standing committee to look at the awards and would like the Fellowship Committee to review those. The other will be reviewed by the Research and Graduate Studies Development Council or a subset of that group.

Grading Procedures: Bond distributed the January 17, 2011 Executive Summary from the Faculty Senate Academic Affairs Committee regarding a plus or minus grading system. Bennardo stated that the committee had at least a six month discussion before writing the report. He stated that this is only a suggestion. Each faculty member of the committee polled their departments. There was about 60% agreement in favor of the change.

Holt asked what the responsibility of the Graduate Council is regarding the grading system. Bond responded that the Graduate Council is the body that makes decisions on behalf of the graduate grading system. He continued that the Law school already has a plus/minus grading system. If we are interested in keeping consistency between graduate and undergraduate, the Council could work with the undergraduate curricular body to discuss the grading system.

Bennardo stated that there was cost involved in changing the grading system, mostly for computer programming. Smith said that the representatives from the student association seemed surprise by the discussion and were unaware that this was presented as an option. Bennardo replied that from his understanding, students were consulted and the majority of students consulted were in favor of the grade change. Holt suggested the Wisconsin system as a good model. They have an A/B or B/C system. The plus/minus system is too small of an increment. Also, the 4.33 scale for the A+ is not widely used in our state and would create transfer credit difficulties. Bennardo said that the majority of the senate did not support the A/B, B/C system.

Bennardo reiterated that this is only a suggestion and the Graduate Council can make a decision regarding the grading system for graduate students. Bond suggested inviting Alan Rosenbaum to the April Graduate Council meeting to address concerns/questions. Zittel agreed that Rosenbaum could attend, clarify concerns and provide additional information.

Graduate Dean Search Update: Freeman stated that the Search Committee has met and made a recommendation. The paperwork is moving forward and an announcement will be made in the near future.

Meeting adjourned at 10:35 a.m.