WHEREAS, the Graduate Council conducted a survey of UIS graduate programs in order to identify academic honors given to graduate students,

WHEREAS, the range of graduate honors awarded by the graduate programs at UIS include, but are not limited to, excellence in: GPA, closure, and service,

WHEREAS, honors based solely on GPA seem problematic due to the truncated grading scale at the graduate level,

WHEREAS, Graduate Council believes it is appropriate to recognize outstanding students in addition to the program marshals during commencement,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that academic honors should be recognized based on excellence in academic achievement, scholarship, and/or service to the program/university. The Graduate Council recommends recognition of up to a total of two (2) graduate students for academic honors in addition to program marshal in the commencement bulletin. Wording in the bulletin should be as follows:

“Academic programs may designate up to two outstanding graduate students for recognition in the commencement bulletin besides program marshal. Other graduate honors may also be awarded at departmental or college ceremonies.”

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Campus Senate at the University of Illinois at Springfield hereby approve the Resolution to Recognize Academic Honors for Graduate Students at Commencement.

REASONING: Graduate Council (GC) conducted a survey in the fall of 2009 that showed considerable variety and number of honors awarded to graduate students across the university. Fourteen of 19 graduate degree program chairs responded to the survey on quality of graduate
education. Fifty percent favored implementing some recognition of graduate students during commencement (21% not sure and 29% no). Seventy-nine percent of the responding programs indicated that their degree programs awarded honors besides program marshal (e.g., excellence in thesis/project, creative writing, academic achievement, service and other). Sixty-four percent of the responding programs indicated the honors were awarded by vote of the tenure and tenure-track faculty.

GC discussed a variety of strategies for standardizing honors awarded for recognition at commencement, and agreed that recognition should be flexible enough to allow degree programs to establish criteria for selecting the students recommended for honors without structured university guidelines. The Council also agreed that the number of students formally recognized should be limited in order to afford special standing for the students among their fellow graduating students. Although GC understands that some academic programs would prefer that honors be designated according to a percentage of students, the Council acknowledges that students in very small programs might be shut out of the process if designated by percentage. GC believes this resolution represents a compromise that will allow fair and consistent university commencement recognition of graduate honors. Additional honors can be awarded by the academic programs within departmental or college ceremonies.

This resolution does not require degree programs to identify students for honors; it merely limits the number of students per degree a program may honor during commencement to two students in addition to the program marshal. As the commencement bulletin includes all graduating students (i.e., not limited to those participating in commencement), students honored in the commencement bulletin need not be present for commencement.