October 24, 2008

Graduate Council
Mississippi State University

Number: 2
Date: October 24, 2008

Present: G. Adebiyi, H. Bailey, L. Barrow, G. Butler (for K. Schulz), F. Coleman, L.
Cossman, S. Cottrell (for P. Bonfanti), L. D’Abramo, K. Dooley, J. Gilbert, B.
Hamil, C. Hill (for S. Nobles), M. Millea, N. Ponder, P. Rabideau, B. Rauhaus (for
T. West), D. Reynolds, J. Silva, D. Wise, N. Younan

Absent: W. Batchelor, M. Binkley, T. Chamblee, D. Jackson, W. Person, R. Shivaji

Guests: J. Goodin, K. Lee, J. To, R. Burrell

1. Dr. Dwayne Wise called the meeting to order at 1:30 p.m. in 611 Allen Hall.

2. Dr. Wise asked for any revisions to the minutes (September 26, 2008).

   Dr. Meghan Millea pointed out that page 5 contained a notation to verify the names of the
   abbreviations TOEFL and IELTS. She suggested that the actual names should replace that
   notation.

   Motion was made by Dr. Daniel Reynolds and seconded by Dr. Burnette Hamil to accept the
   minutes with the noted amendment above.

   Minutes were approved by acclamation.

3. University Committee on Courses and Curricula (UCCC)

   No Report.

4. Report from the Office of the Graduate School (OGS)

   Dr. Louis D’Abramo presented the following report:

   a) As part of reorganization in the Office of the Graduate School, OGS recently hired Ms.
   Christine Rousseau as Administrative Assistant to the Dean. She will start her position
   on November 3, 2008. Interviews to fill a position of Accounting Assistant are
   scheduled to begin soon.

   b) The official graduate enrollment for the 2008-2009 Academic Year is 3,537.

   c) A total of 1,097 students hold a graduate assistantship this semester.
d) 80% of applications are now done electronically compared to 54% in 2006. Hopefully, this number will continue to grow, the ultimate goal is 100% of applications processed online.

e) The number of doctoral students who applied for graduation in December is 49. This number will still change but we anticipate the number of Ph.D.’s who will actually graduate to be around 45 for fall 2008. By comparison, in fall of 2006, 40 doctoral students graduated and in fall 2007, that number was 44. If our projected number of 45 doctoral graduates holds true for fall 2008, we will have 78 Ph.D.’s who graduated for the academic year 2008-2009 which starts with the summer semester for doctoral counts. This is a low estimate; we fully expect our doctoral count to be higher when the spring 2009 semester is included.

f) As of October 12, 2008, we have 448 applications for the spring 2009 semester, compared with 409 last year for the same semester. That represents an increase of about 10% total. Total spring applications for domestic have increased by 52.7% and international by 7.3%, relative to last year.

For fall 2009 semester, the total number of applications is 59, fall 2008 that number was 46. Again, we show an increase of 28.3%, domestic and international is almost equal. Overall, there is an 8% increase for 2009 applications to date.

g) This year, we had a 63% response rate for the Survey of Earned Doctorates at Mississippi State University (previously, that response rate was less than 20%). The reason for the increased response rate is a change to an electronic survey format. This information is very important and is now more representative of the graduate student population at MSU.

h) The attendance numbers for fall 2008 TA Workshops are: International: 72 (69 passed), General: 191 (182 passed). The spring 2009 TA Workshops will be held January 5 and 6, each day starting at 9:00 a.m. at Allen 13. Presently, we are working to change the format for spring 2009 and fall 2009 TA Workshops. Changes will include revised content and organization of sessions as well as collaboration with the Teaching and Learning Center. Only TAs with classroom teaching responsibilities will be required to make presentations and be evaluated. The presentation time for evaluations will be increased to allow for more accurate evaluation. In addition, we also have online content modules and quizzes for all TAs (those with and without classroom teaching responsibilities).

i) New Graduate Student Orientation in fall 2008 had over 360 new graduate students in attendance. We are planning a spring 2009 Orientation which is presently scheduled for January 6 at 2:00 pm, the location is yet to be determined. We will be able to provide this information at the next Graduate Council meeting.

j) We anticipate that the new Graduate School Website will be operational by mid-November. It will be very beneficial especially for new graduate students as it will
familiarize them with MSU, the Graduate School and the Starkville community. If you want to take a look at the new website, the address is www2.grad.msstate.edu. Presently, 75% of the content has been incorporated. If you have any suggestions or notice any errors, please let Ms. Julie Goodin know.

k) An ad hoc committee of the Graduate Council consisting of Drs. Bailey, Silva and Millea have agreed to review two academic dismissal appeals. Dr. Bailey has agreed to serve as chair of one of the committees and Dr. Silva has agreed to serve as the chair of the other. Thank you for your time in assisting with this very important task.

l) The Alliance for Graduate Education in Mississippi (AGEM) Winter Symposium will be held in Jackson, MS on January 22-24, 2009. We are encouraging our STEM (Science/Technology/Engineering/Mathematics) graduate faculty to participate in this symposium which is expected to involve approximately 300 STEM undergraduate and graduate students. Dr. William Person will be able to provide more details on that soon.

5. Report from Graduate Student Association (GSA)

Mr. Terrance West, GSA president, was not present. Vice President Beth Rauhaus presented the following report:

The first meeting of the GSA was held on Tuesday, September 30. We are pleased to report a record attendance of 40 graduate students. Dr. D’Abramo, the new Dean of the Graduate School, served as speaker.

The next GSA meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, October 28 at Allen Hall. All graduate students will be informed about the meeting two or three days prior via email.

6. Old Business

a) Increase in application fee/late fee (Handout)

Dr. Wise asked Dr. D’Abramo to speak about this topic.

Dr. D’Abramo made a request to Graduate Council on behalf of the Graduate School to recommend an increase of the graduate application fee, both domestic and international, from $30 to $40. He based his request on the mean application fee at both SEC and non-SEC institutions (illustrated in handout) which are both higher than our current application fee.

Dr. D’Abramo reasoned that the increase is reasonable based on the comparison figures provided. He stated that the funds generated will go toward hiring an additional admissions assistant employee, and increased recruitment activities mandated by the restructuring of the Graduate School. The increase may also partially fund bridge assistantships and other types of aid to bring high quality graduate students to MSU.
Discussion followed. What if students cannot afford the $40 application fee? It was determined that departments could always cover the application fee for their prospective students.

Dr. Peter Rabideau stated that the lion share of graduate recruiting should be done at the departmental level. However, he acknowledged that international recruiting could be facilitated very effectively through the Graduate School. Dr. D’Abramo said that the Graduate School is a service unit that wants to complement and assist with departmental recruitment efforts, not take on sole responsibility for such.

Dr. Hamil stated that a $10 increase of the graduate application fee is much deserved. The current graduate admission staff is often working long hours to process all the applications in a very timely manner, even with the electronic application. If applications continue to increase, additional manpower will be needed and the increase could also be used to fund an additional admissions position.

Dr. Larry Barrow made a motion to recommend a $10 increase of the graduate application fee from $30 to $40. Dr. Hamil seconded the motion.

The motion carried by acclamation.

Dr. Wise moved the next agenda item (Statistics course) to the next Graduate Council meeting.

b) Transfer Approval Form (Handout)

Ms. Rita Burrell stated that in November 2007, Graduate Council started to revamp the transfer policy for domestic, military and international graduate students. The policy was approved in January 2008 and amended in April 2008 to transfer courses without an equivalent MSU course as a special topic course. The only thing remaining was the development of a form that would encompass all the changes on one form.

Ms. Burrell asked Graduate Council for feedback concerning the form prepared by Dr. Barbara Spencer and her.

Dr. Nick Younan made a motion to approve the transfer approval form as presented. Dr. Lynne Cossman seconded the motion.

The motion carried by acclamation and the form was approved.

7. New Business

a) Review for criteria for Graduate Faculty membership (Handout)
Dr. D’Abramo began this topic with a side note regarding information from departments for the Graduate Bulletin. He pointed out that program changes were submitted for inclusion in the Graduate Bulletin that had only been approved at the department level but had not been cleared through UCCC prior to submission to OGS. Associate Deans and Graduate Coordinators questioned why OGS is unable to include those changes in the Graduate Bulletin without that approval. Dr. D’Abramo urged Graduate Council members to remind their departments and deans that changes (other than format or organizational changes in the Graduate Bulletin) must be approved by UCCC and Graduate Council first. He further emphasized that information regarding degree requirements must be consistent wherever such information is published, from the Graduate Bulletin to individual departmental websites.

Discussion followed. It was determined that any policy changes should go though the proper channels (per guidance from the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools – SACS) before they are published in the Graduate Bulletin.

Dr. D’Abramo stated that while making changes to the Graduate Bulletin over the past few weeks, problems with graduate faculty membership came to light. He asked Graduate Council to review a handout listing some of the problems that are frequently encountered and requested volunteers to form an ad hoc committee to review the criteria for graduate faculty membership.

Drs. Barrow, Hamil, Millea and Hart Bailey agreed to serve on the ad hoc committee. Dr. D’Abramo will await their recommendations at a future Graduate Council meeting.

b) Graduate School Admission Automatic Email Response to Recommendation Letter Writers (Handout)

Dr. D’Abramo stated that he came across an automated response email at other institutions and thought it would be a good idea to implement this for the Graduate School at MSU. He stated that he just wanted to inform Graduate Council members about this automated email response that is now in place. When someone provides a letter of reference for a graduate applicant, he/she will automatically receive this email which formally thanks he letter writer for the time and effort spent on behalf of the applicant. At the same time, MSU is promoted and the website addresses for review of graduate education at MSU are provided. Therefore, the email serves as a marketing tool as well as a courteous and professional acknowledgement.

c) Graduate Recruitment Assistance Grants (Handout)

Dr. D’Abramo pointed out that this grant is really nothing new. However, he stated that the amount for the 15 grants that will be awarded has been increased from $500 - $1,000 to $1,500 to $2,000 each.

Dr. D’Abramo asked Graduate Council members to note the priority statement for the recruitment of minorities and underrepresented students and the new requirement for a
report after the activities supported by the award are completed. Reporting will provide accountability and also support requests to secure funding for future recruitment activities.

Meeting adjourned at 2:45 p.m.

The date for the next Graduate Council meeting has been set for 1:30 p.m. on November 21, 2008, at 611 Allen Hall.