Graduate Council
Mississippi State University

Number: 3
Date: October 27, 2006


Absent: T. Hosie, D. Reynolds, W. Person, C. Scanes, R. Shivaji, B. Spencer, R. Taylor

Guests: Larry Dalton

1. Dr. John Boyle called the meeting to order at 1:36 p.m. in the Templeton Conference Room, 4th Floor of Mitchell Memorial Library.

2. Quorum was not met, so the vote to accept the minutes from the last meeting was delayed until enough voting members were present.

3. Report from the University Committee on Courses and Curricula (UCCC)

   Dr. Boyle introduced Larry Dalton, Director of the Six Sigma “Black Belt” Certification Program.

   Mr. Dalton explained the undergraduate/graduate certificate in manufacturing proposal and provided background information on the engineering certificate program.

   Discussion followed regarding prerequisite courses and the advantages for students to have this type of certification included on their transcripts.

   Motion was made by Dr. Scott Willard and seconded by Dr. Lou D’Abramo to accept the certificate in manufacturing.

4. Dr. Boyle asked for any revisions to the minutes (September 22, 2006).

   Motion was made by Dr. Dwayne Wise and seconded by Dr. Willard to accept the minutes.

   Minutes were approved.

5. Report from Graduate Studies (OGS)
Dr. William Person was not present. In his absence, Dr. Boyle distributed a written report submitted by Dr. Person with the following information:

a) Recruitment Assistance Grant (RAG) awards were made to fifteen graduate programs in five of the eight colleges. Funds requested totaled $10,771; funds awarded totaled $8,250.

b) The Office of Graduate Studies participated in the Graduate and Professional School Fair at Tuskegee University on October 12 and at Mississippi State University on October 24.

c) To date, there are 1020 graduate assistants for Fall 2006 (588 GRAs; 141 GSAs; and 291 GTAs). By comparison, in Fall 2005, there were 968 GAs.

d) The Office of Graduate Studies is about to launch another phase of its online graduate application—the letters of recommendation. This means that applicants will then be able to complete the application, statement of purpose, and letters of recommendation online. Additionally, the application fee may be paid online as well. The ultimate goal is to have a complete online application procedure. Currently, it is estimated that approximately 70% of applicants use the online procedures.

e) The College of Business and Industry and the Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering will serve as the test programs for launching electronic scanning/imaging workflow procedures for graduate applications. Recently, Drs. Barbara Spencer and Nick Younan have been involved in several meetings with OGS and ITS staff members to address this matter.

f) A planning meeting was held on October 16 with three academic areas interested in developing proposals to U.S. Department of Education to participate in the Graduate Assistance in Areas of National Need (GAANN) program. The proposal deadline for this program is November 20, 2006.

g) OGS office is developing an enrollment tracking database by graduate program and college at the master’s and doctoral levels (and educational specialist level in the College of Education) based upon the official Fall enrollment each year. The Office of Institutional Research is assisting us with this project.

h) OGS recently disseminated a paper copy and CD of the 2006-2007 MSU Graduate Bulletin to graduate coordinators, academic department heads, and university administrative offices.

Ms. Pam Sullivan of OGS distributed CD copies of the 2006-2007 MSU Graduate Bulletin to Graduate Council members.
6. Report from Graduate Student Association (GSA)

Mr. Mark Thomas, GSA vice president, presented the following report:

a) The second GSA meeting was held October 19, 2006. Proposed changes to the GSA constitution were read in regard to appointing department representatives and officers. Changes will be voted on during the next GSA meeting.

b) GSA formed a “Social Committee” with the purpose to increase graduate student visibility on campus and the public arena.

c) GSA formed a Thesis and Dissertation Advisory Committee, made up of fellow graduate students. Graduate students who are getting ready to defend will be able to practice their thesis/dissertation defense with this committee.

7. Old Business

a) Streamlining the dissertation/thesis process (Handout)

Dr. Willard, Chair of the Graduate Council Subcommittee for Streamlining the Dissertation/Thesis Process presented the following report:

- The committee reviewed the revised 2006 (5th Edition) “Standards for Preparing Theses and Dissertations” and will email the document to the Graduate Council Chair after some more editing. The committee hopes to submit the revised document at the November 17 Graduate Council meeting.

- The Subcommittee, in cooperation with the library and the GSA, will develop a set of linked templates that students could use to assist with formatting.

- It was determined that no link regarding thesis and dissertation guidelines currently exists between the OGS website and the library. Ms. Sullivan will work on establishing a highly visible link to the library site from the OGS website that deals with thesis and dissertation information.

- The Subcommittee recommends that the library phase in required electronic submissions and eliminate paper-only submissions. The students would submit the thesis or dissertation electronically (PDF) and provide one initial paper copy with the signed approval page to the library. The one initial paper copy is still needed for editorial purposes by the library, but further revisions would only be done electronically and the document would be archived electronically as the current electronic submissions are being archived. Students could still choose to pay
binding fees, etc. to generate their own personal hard copies, but binding for paper copy library archive purposes would be eliminated.

- The Subcommittee laid out the advantages of an all-electronic thesis/dissertation submission:
  
  o Elimination of the library-specific binding fee incurred by students
  
  o More archive space for the library
  
  o Enhanced searching capabilities for thesis/dissertations
  
  o Students could hyperlink to their thesis/dissertations
  
  o Media components of thesis/dissertations, such as images, videos and sound can be maintained and expanded
  
  o Cost savings due to paper reduction for students and the library
  
  o Enhanced accessibility for vision-impaired students

Discussion ensued concerning students without computers and software to create PDF files. It was determined that the Instructional Media Lab in the library provides the student with computers and all necessary software.

Discussion regarding a blank line on the thesis/dissertation signature form to the library followed. Current policy per Graduate Council decision of October 2005 states (Graduate Bulletin 2006-07, pg. 51):

*One negative vote will not constitute failure for students on preliminary/comprehensive examinations and/or defenses of theses/dissertations. Two negative votes will constitute failure for students on preliminary/comprehensive examinations and/or defenses of theses/dissertations.*

How would the library know that the signature was left off due to a dissenting vote of student’s committee member? It was determined that the library will request a letter from the student’s graduate coordinator to explain the blank line.

Questions were raised regarding the authenticity and validity of the student’s thesis/dissertation committee signing off on the examination page versus the signature page that the student submits to the library. How is the library to know who is supposed to sign on the form?

Discussion followed. It was determined that OGS will send a copy of the committee request form and subsequent changes to the library after OGS
receives the examination result form because at that point there will be no more changes.

Discussion followed about all-electronic thesis/dissertation submission versus a paper-copy one. Consensus was reached that this issue will be revisited at the next Graduate Council meeting after Graduate Coordinators and GSA members had a chance to discuss and provide feedback.

8. New Business

a. Leadership Minor for Graduate Students (handout)

In the absence of Dr. Peter Rabideau, Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs, Dr. Jerry Gilbert, Associate Provost and Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs, gave the following report:

One graduate student who is aware of the efforts to develop a minor in leadership at the undergraduate level has asked why we don’t consider a leadership minor at the graduate level as well.

A brief discussion followed. It was determined that a minor is more difficult to develop than a certificate like, for instance, the certificate in Women’s Studies. A minor needs to be tied to a major or a concentration which needs to be housed in a department whereas a certificate can be a free-floating interdisciplinary program that is very flexible.

Offering a certificate in leadership would allow more students to participate because the courses could be tailored to individual student needs.

Dr. Gilbert will request a proposal from the provost and ask for a list of suggested courses.

b. Electronic application process review

Dr. Younan, Professor in Electrical and Computer Engineering, gave the following report:

The Office of Graduate Studies is currently going through another phase in developing their online application process. The departments of Electrical and Computer Engineering and Graduate Studies in Business are participating as test departments.

The goal is to have the entire application process online, including letters of recommendation. The majority of hard-copy documents that arrive at OGS are transcripts. However, in collaboration with MSU Information Technology Services (ITS) and an outside consulting firm, a process is being developed that
calls for electronic imaging (scanning) of hardcopy documents such as transcripts. Once an application is complete, a workflow will be sent to the appropriate graduate coordinator to look at the application online and make an admission decision.

For departments, one of the advantages of having all the application information in electronic format is that there is instant access to a student’s application information instead of waiting until a complete file is sent to a department.

A concrete time frame to have a completely electronic graduate application process in place has not yet been established. However, OGS is working hard to complete the process as soon as possible.

Discussion followed about how departments will access the electronic application and payment of application fees for students without access to a computer, particularly international students. It was determined that departments will be granted access to electronic files as needed and that students without computers will still be able to send a check to pay for the application fee.

The electronic application process will help minimize time delays in getting applications to the departments during bottleneck times.

The general consensus of the Graduate Council is that they are anxious for the implementation of the electronic graduate application process.

Meeting adjourned at 2:30 p.m.

The next Graduate Council meeting will be held on November 17, 2006 at 611 Allen Hall.