1. Dr. Tom Hosie called the meeting to order at 1:33 p.m. in Conference Room 611 Allen Hall.

2. Dr. Hosie asked for any revisions of the minutes (September 23, 2005). Dr. Greg Dunaway stated to the Council that some of the statements in the minutes concerning the Sociology Department were not quite accurate, and he would like to address those later in the meeting. Dr. Lora Ballweber noted that she was absent and that Dr. Chin Ling Wang represented her in her absence. Also, it was noted that Dr. Scott Willard was present at the September meeting. On motion by Dr. Lou D’Abramo and second by Dr. Nick Younan, the Council voted to accept the September 23, 2005, minutes with noted modifications.

3. UCCC Report
   
   o Modification to Geospatial and Remote Sensing Certificate Program

   Dr. Hosie noted that this is a modification to the certificate program that was approved in August 2002. Coursework will be increased from six hours to nine hours with the intent of broadening students’ skills and add new and existing geospatially-oriented courses to the required and elective course offerings.

   Ms. Rita Burrell noted that the Graduate Council modified the initial certificate proposal in August 2002 to reflect the 3.0 GPA requirement for Graduate Studies. Dr. Bill Cooke, contact person for the modification, had a schedule conflict and was not in attendance. If there were questions regarding the proposal, Dr. Cooke had indicated that he would make arrangements to come immediately to answer them.

   Dr. D’Abramo asked for clarification. Is this a certificate only or can students gain certification while working on a degree? Dr. Younan noted that students can earn certification while pursuing a degree.
On motion by Dr. Dan Reynolds and second by Dr. Lora Ballweber, the Council unanimously voted to accept the proposed modifications to the Geospatial and Remote Sensing Technologies Certificate.

4. Report from the Office of Graduate Studies

Dr. Hosie stated that Dr. William Person is out of town at a conference. Dr. Hosie distributed the written Office of Graduate Studies Report. Dr. Person’s report follows:

a. I am pleased to announce the employment of Ms. LaTonya R. Hardin as Program Coordinator in the Office of Graduate Studies. In addition to serving as AGEM Coordinator, Ms. Hardin will assist with other programs in our office such as GAANN, SREB, NSF Graduate Fellowships and overall recruitment initiatives.

b. A meeting was held with the Graduate Coordinators on October 6, 2005, to present and discuss our proposal for implementing a complete electronic application and admissions process by May 2006. Approximately 30 of the 48 graduate coordinators, or their representative, were present for the meeting.

c. Several academic departments are currently working with the Office of Graduate Studies to develop GAANN (Graduate Assistance in Areas of National Need) Fellowship proposals. The deadline for submission of these was changed from November 14 to December 1 due to the fact that Oktibbeha County is on the list of those Mississippi counties affected by Hurricane Katrina.

d. To date, according to Ms. Rita Burrell, we have the following applications for December 2005 graduation: doctoral, 52; educational specialist, 14; master’s, 268, for a total of 334.

e. To date for the fall 2005 semester, according to Ms. Cathy Sides, we have the following graduate assistants: Graduate Research Assistants, 539, Graduate Service Assistants, 110, Graduate Teaching Assistants, 301, for a total of 950.

f. A total of 22 potential students were invited to consider Mississippi State University for graduate study at the Annual Graduate and Professional Conference at Tuskegee University, October 13, 2005. Email messages and letters have been sent to these students.

g. A total of 21 potential students were invited to consider Mississippi State University for graduate study at the Fall Graduate and Professional Fair at Mississippi State University, October 25, 2005. Email messages and letters have been sent to these students.

Ms. Burrell introduced Ms. LaTonya Hardin to the Council as the new AGEM Program Coordinator and noted that the office is glad to have her joining the staff.
5. Report from Graduate Student Association – Mr. Erich Bergiel

Mr. Erich Bergiel informed the Council that GSA had a meeting on October 22, 2005, and everything went well.

At the September Graduate Council, Mr. Bergiel noted his intent to explore the possibility of securing some additional funding from the restaurant tax in Starkville. This is not possible. GSA funding will be the same as last year.

GSA continues to discuss issues and explore possibilities relative to concerns of graduate assistants about health insurance for themselves and their families. At a recent meeting, Dr. Scanes asked that he provide the Council with information about the cost of insurance for graduate students. Mr. Bergiel distributed an estimated budget for an MSU graduate student with a wife and child and insurance expenditures (based on an assistantship that pays $884/month). Dr. Scanes noted that insurance benefits are an important part of the recruitment package for graduate students. Mr. Bergiel indicated that GSA proposes forming a subcommittee to gather information about how other universities are dealing with insurance coverage for graduate assistants. This is a particularly important issue for graduate students with families. Most children of graduate assistants are insured with CHIP, a state funded program. The $943 coverage reflected on the handout is the amount of MSU insurance to add a child. This program does not allow children to utilize the MSU Student Health Center until after age 14.

Discussion followed about ways to provide insurance to graduate assistants. Dr. Scanes noted that the best way to achieve this would be to increase stipends to cover the cost of insurance. There is no University requirement restricting the increase in assistantship stipends to cover the cost of insurance.

6. Old Business

Definition of a comprehensive preliminary examination and final defense of dissertation – what constitutes a pass/fail

Dr. Hosie reminded the Council of the issues discussed at the September 23, 2005, meeting: 1) the minimum vote to pass and 2) one negative vote cannot prevent passing. The Council approved at the September meeting that no more than one dissenting vote is allowed for a pass regardless of the size of the committee. Dr. Hosie has spoken with Dr. Marty Levin in Sociology concerning the rules in Sociology for what constitutes pass/fail. Dr. Hosie noted that Dr. Levin stated that he thinks it is best to have the full Sociology Department discuss this issue.

Dr. Gregory Dunaway indicated that he would like the Graduate Council minutes to reflect that the committee unanimity rule in the Department of Sociology, Anthropology, and Social Work pertains to the scheduling of the thesis/dissertation defense, not pass/fail of the defense. Simple majority is used for determination of pass/fail. Dr. Scanes asked if a student not being allowed to schedule a defense could be interpreted as a de facto
veto or failure. Dr. Dunaway indicated there is policy in place to deal with issues if a student is unable to schedule a defense if a committee member is obstinate.

Dr. Hosie asked if the Council has additional concerns since no department has a veto for thesis/dissertation defenses.

Dr. Dunaway asked if the Council had agreed on a 2/3 pass rule at the previous meeting.

Dr. Lora Ballweber clarified that the Council had voted that one negative vote cannot fail a student on examinations or defense.

Upon approval of October 25, 2005, Graduate Council minutes and approval from the Provost, this policy will become effective and be communicated to graduate coordinators via email.

One negative vote by a committee member will not constitute failure for students on comprehensive/preliminary examinations and/or thesis/dissertation defenses.

Two negative votes by committee members will constitute failure for students on comprehensive/preliminary examinations and/or thesis/dissertation defenses.

7. New Business

a. Residence Requirements

Ms. Rita Burrell distributed the policy regarding the residency requirements for doctoral students for academic year 2005-2006, 2002-2003, and 2000-2001 (so that the Council could track policy changes), as well as a list of the doctoral residency requirements for the 22 peer institutions. Dr. Hosie indicated that the 2002-2003 change was made due to SACs requirements.

Dr. Hosie noted the current policy, page 63 of the 2005-2006 Bulletin, item #4 in handout – Residence Requirement, at sometime during the doctoral program, students are required to devote one full-time semester (9 hours) or two part-time semesters (6 hours) in residence. These are not consecutive semesters as one of the previous policies required. The intention was to open up more flexibility for students. There is not a distinction between hours through Continuing Education and hours taken face-to-face on campus.

Ms. Burrell stated that she has counted Continuing Education hours as Main Campus hours.

Dr. Colin Scanes informed the Council that there is, however, a problem. He stated that Ms. Burrell’s interpretation of the policy is very reasonable, but our policy, as published, does not state that. Current SACS requirements do not specify a residency requirement. Since this is no longer required, it is not
necessary to continue this policy. If we follow what is written, we could not form collaborate arrangements with other universities for joint degrees.

Dr. Scanes indicated that the current policy is prohibitive in recruiting doctoral students from across the country. MSU must be flexible in order to be competitive in recruitment of students.

Discussion followed which centered around distance delivery of doctoral programs and the need for doctoral students to spend time on campus. Dr. Tim Chamblee noted that the Faculty Senate and the University Committee on Courses and Curricula will be reviewing courses/programs offered via distance learning. The delivery method of courses needs to be reviewed and approved.

Dr. Scanes reiterated that he would like to see the residence policy changed to reflect current practice.

Dr. Barbara Spencer noted that the individual colleges could still require residency, if so desired.

At the request of Dr. Hosie, Ms. Burrell read the policy from 2002-2003: “Residence Requirement – Ph.D. students will be required to complete one-half of required course work and all dissertation credits from Mississippi State University. However, schools and colleges can still set degree-specific residency requirements.”

Dr. Willard stated that 2002-2003 policy fits the current practice and meets the need for flexibility.

Discussion followed.

On motion by Dr. Reynolds and second by Dr. D’Abramo, the Council voted unanimously to adopt the 2002-2003 residence requirement as follows:

“Residence Requirement – Ph.D. students will be required to complete one-half of required course work and all dissertation credits from Mississippi State University. Departments, schools, and colleges can set degree-specific residency requirements.”

b. Enhancing Graduate Education at MSU

The document was distributed as part of the meeting packet.

Dr. Scanes discussed ways to enhance graduate enrollment at MSU. Consideration is being given to ways in which MSU can make program offerings more attractive. These include looking at additional Ph.D. programs, offering the professional master’s by combining majors and minors in specific ways, perhaps a minor in an
area that is not within the same field (for example, a communication or business minor or master’s combined with a Ph. D. in chemical engineering). He would like input from the Council in enhancing education and increasing graduate enrollment at MSU.

Discussion followed.

Dr. Hosie suggested that more attention be given to the document and suggested that it be put on the agenda for the next Graduate Council meeting.

c. Readmission of Graduate Students

Dr. Scanes asked the Council to review the current readmission policy.

Dr. Scanes noted that our current process is cumbersome and problematic. If a student fails to enroll for a fall or spring semester, s/he must complete an Application for Readmission before being permitted to continue enrollment. This is a labor intensive process. If a student is late in seeking re-admittance, s/he may not be able to enroll in desired courses. It does not seem to be a good use of time for a student to have to apply, get accepted, come for a semester, be away for a semester, then have to reapply. This is particularly problematic for part-time students.

Ms. Burrell distributed to the Council a copy of the current policy as well as a list of how the 22 peer institutions handle the readmission process.

The Council reviewed the information provided on readmission for the 22 peer institutions. Discussion followed. Dr. Gilbert noted that the continuous registration requirement must be considered in this issue. Ms. Burrell noted that continuous registration would not be a consideration until students have completed course work.

Dr. D’Abramo made a motion to change MSU’s readmission policy to reflect that readmission is needed only after a break of three or more semesters, excluding summer (University of New Mexico model). Dr. Ballweber seconded the motion.

Ms. Burrell asked if the Council would like her to compose a draft of the section on readmission in the bulletin, taking into consideration the continuous registration requirement, and bring it back to Council for review at next month’s meeting.

Dr. Ballweber moved to table the motion to the next meeting; Dr. Larry Barrow seconded the motion. There was unanimous approval to table the motion to the next meeting.

d. Signature of Academic Dean on Approval Page of Thesis and Dissertation

Dr. Nick Younan stated that the Dean of the College of Engineering is requesting that theses and dissertations in that college by signed by Dr. Roger King, Associate Dean
for Research and Graduate Studies, under Dr. King’s own name and title. Dr. King will read and review all theses and dissertations for the College of Engineering. The initial request was made to the Electronic Theses and Dissertations Office; that office referred the request to Graduate Council.

Dr. Gilbert noted that this would establish the associate dean as *de facto* dean for theses and dissertations. Discussion followed. Dr. Gilbert noted that the college dean is the ultimate authority figure and suggested that the dean’s name should remain on the thesis/dissertation title page. Dr. King should sign his name for Dean Schulz.

On motion by Dr. D’Abramo and second by Dr. Shivaji the Council voted unanimously to affirm the requirement of the signature of the dean on the thesis/dissertation approval page; an authorized representative may sign for the dean.

Meeting adjourned at 2:55 p.m.