Graduate Council Minutes  
Mississippi State University

NUMBER:  4

DATE:  November 16, 2001


ABSENT:  R. Altenkirch, S. Bullington, F. Coleman, G. Dunaway, T. Hosie, R. Jenkins, D. Miller, W. Person, B. Spencer, C. Taylor, S. Watson

GUESTS:  B. Taylor, N. Younan

1. Dr. John Boyle called the meeting to order at 1:30 p.m. in room 611 Allen Hall.

2. A motion was made, seconded, and unanimously approved to adopt the minutes of the Graduate Council meeting held on October 26, 2001.

3. Dr. Boyle introduced Dr. Bob Taylor and Dr. Nick Younan from the College of Engineering as guests to speak on self-managed versus electronic applications or combinations of the two so the Council could explore the ramifications and variations of these procedures. Dr. Taylor distributed to the Council the packet that the College of Engineering uses for international students’ self-managed applications. The document is similar to the MSU application with a few modifications that were worked out with the Office of Admissions. Engineering has a parallel application packet for domestic students. A checklist is included on the back of the packet. Twenty-five percent of the College of Engineering’s applications are coming in as self-managed. The package comes complete, in a sealed envelope to the department. The application fee is forwarded to the Office of Graduate Studies, and a photocopy of the method of payment is kept with the admissions packet. The department then processes the application, and the results are sent to the Office of Admissions. If the packet is incomplete the department forwards the packet to the Office of Admissions, so they can record an incomplete for the application. If the department is particularly interested, they can follow up with the student. The College of Engineering is in their second year of offering the self-managed application procedure, and they reported being pleased with the system. Dr. Boyle stated that there was a consensus among the deans that the application process needs to be streamlined. Dr. Boyle stated that with the electronic application there are still papers to gather, but with the self-managed process the student gets everything together in one packet. The College of Engineering also has the application available for students to download. Diane Wolf stated that there is no down
side to self-managed applications for the Office of Admissions, but communication between the Office of Admissions and the departments is essential for timely processing of the applications. Ms. Wolf further stated the departments of Engineering and Broadcast Meteorology are the two departments that utilize the self-managed application. Dr. Taylor stated that the student self-reports their scores, the application is reviewed on that basis, and the student is admitted contingent upon the submission of official test scores. Dr. George Rent stated that research across the country has shown that self reported scores, particularly GPA’s, are accurate. Ms Wolfe stated the Office of Admissions has stopped accepting the letter of verification from MSU’s testing center because the student is required to fill out their own scores, and frequently they are incorrectly recorded. The advantages to the electronic application are that it provides convenience to the prospective student and the university does not have to send a hard copy, which saves time and money. An advantage to the online application is that the time of submission is clear, and it is not necessary for an employee of MSU to enter the data because the student enters it directly into the database. Ms. Wolfe stated that beginning this fall all undergraduates are going to be required to use the electronic application. Dr. Boyle stated that there are many reasons for departments to use the self-managed application process.

4. There was no report from the University Committee on Courses and Curricula.

5. In Dr. Person’s absence, Dr. Boyle distributed copies of the following report from the Office of Graduate Studies:

- The revised edition of the *Thesis and Dissertation Guidelines* has been completed and is available in the Office of Graduate Studies and the Thesis and Dissertation Office of Mitchell Memorial Library.

- Recruitment Assistance Grants (RAG) awards have been made to 21 academic programs in six colleges (Agriculture and Life Sciences, Arts & Sciences, Business & Industry, Education, Engineering, and Forestry). The total amount awarded in this year’s competition is $14,102.

- A comparative report for the past two academic years (1999-2000 and 2000-2001) on graduate assistantship awards has been prepared for your information. The unduplicated count of total awards for 2000-2001 is 1520, which represents an increase of 191 awards over the unduplicated count for 1999-2000. The percentages of type of graduate assistantships (teacher, service, and research) awarded remained relatively constant for both periods. (attached)

- The U.S. Department of Education will not have a RFP competition for new GAANN (Graduate Assistance in Areas of National Need) Fellowships for 2002. In an earlier report we indicated our intent to work with mathematics and engineering to participate in the RFP competition.
The Winter Scholars Symposium for the Alliance for Graduate Education in Mississippi (AGEM) program has been scheduled for January 24-26, 2002, at the University of the Southern Mississippi in Hattiesburg. Invitations have been sent to the SMET graduate faculty and administrators. We are expecting approximately 400 current graduate and potential graduate students from Mississippi and surrounding states to be in attendance. Please encourage our SMET students at MSU to participate in the scientific research poster competition, and please encourage our SMET faculty to participate in the recruitment fair portion of the Winter Symposium. Registration packet information is available in the Office of Graduate Studies.

6. Dee Perkins and Michele Williams, from the Graduate Student Association gave their report. Mr. Perkins reviewed the minutes of the Graduate Student Association’s last meeting. The GSA is co-sponsoring a seminar in which Dr. Susan Berget will give a presentation on Academic Misconduct in Research to be held December 3, 2001 in Mitchell Memorial Library Auditorium at 1:00 p.m. The GSA is sponsoring five angels and filling 75 stockings. Five departments received an angel tree to fill, and toy boxes have been placed in various departments to get the toys for the 75 stockings. The GSA will be assisting the Salvation Army with a pancake breakfast sometime in the near future.

Ms. Michele Williams met with Dr. Luther Epstein from Career Services regarding her suggestion for a statewide career fair targeting graduate students. Ms. Williams requested that departments give her contact information concerning key companies for recruitment purposes. Career Services is considering having a few seminars for the graduate students.

7. As a matter of old business, Dr. Boyle reintroduced the issue of the residency requirements. Dr. Boyle requested that the Graduate Council amend item #7 of last month’s minutes to say “At some time in the doctoral career the student will be required to devote one full semester (nine hours) or two semesters half-time (six hours each) in residence at Mississippi State University to the graduate program.” Ms. Kerry Paul will be responsible for making this editorial change.

8. Dr. Boyle passed on a second item of old business, which was regarding the creation of a new student category. Dr. Boyle was not prepared to discuss the issue at this time.

9. Dr. Boyle distributed a memorandum summarizing the meetings that Dr. Rent and he held with the academic deans concerning graduate education. During these meetings, Drs. Boyle and Rent emphasized to them that they are now the graduate deans. Issues of quality and processes were discussed. None of the graduate deans had any comments on the current decentralized operation of graduate studies. A suggestion was made to have regular meetings devoted to graduate study for the graduate deans; the first of those meetings is set to take place next Monday. Most graduate deans identified the application process as something that they would like streamlined. Several other suggestions were made including such things as producing a general graduate studies brochure, organizing a centralized resource for recruiting and funding/fellowship opportunities, sending Graduate Council memorandums on policies to deans as well as provost, and initiating a program of “departmental report cards” to the deans. These “report cards” would include
information such as admissions exceptions, continuous low grades, and theses/dissertations returned to students due to errors. It was stated that, ultimately, it is the committee members responsibility to assure that the theses/dissertations that are submitted are quality documents. The fact that usually it is an assistant that is reviewing the theses/dissertations may have to change if the graduate council shows a significant number of documents are being returned to the students for errors. The deans reported needing larger stipends to attract quality students. Discussion of how to supplement stipends occurred. All of the graduate deans were requested, at these meetings, to take a proactive role in their duties and responsibilities. Drs. Boyle and Rent also met with the department heads in the College of Education and discussed graduate education.

10. Dr. Boyle stated that the December Graduate Council meeting is scheduled for December 14, 2001, which is the day of commencement. The Council agreed to cancel the December meeting.

11. The meeting adjourned at 2:34 p.m.