Graduate Council  
Mississippi State University

Number: 4  
Date: November 17, 2006


Guests: Mary Ann Woolworth

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

2. Dr. Spencer asked for any revisions to the minutes (October 27, 2006).

   Motion was made by Dr. John Boyle and seconded by Dr. Lynne Cossman to accept the minutes.

   Minutes were approved.

3. Search for the Dean of the Graduate School

   Dr. Spencer referred to the email announcement that was sent out campus-wide and announced that the search for the Dean of the Graduate School is under way. She stated that Dr. George Hopper, Chair of the Search Committee, confirmed that one application and six nominations have been received as of today. Applications and nominations will be accepted through January; screening will begin February 1, 2007.

   Dr. Spencer asked if anyone noticed that the search is for the Dean of the Graduate School, not Office of Graduate Studies.

   Dr. Peter Rabideau explained that while the language commonly used includes both Office of Graduate Studies and Graduate School, having a Dean would make the term Graduate School more appropriate. He stated that the Office of Graduate Studies had been called the Graduate School in the past and had asked Dr. Jerry Gilbert to research whether there had, in fact, been an official IHL name change. Dr. Gilbert discovered that a previous provost simply instituted the name change. Dr. Rabideau said that he would claim the same privilege and reinstate the term Graduate School unless there are any objections. No objections were voiced.
Dr. Spencer relayed a question from Dean Hopper. How does the Graduate Council want to be involved in the search process? Would the Graduate Council want to have meetings with the top candidates?

Dr. Hosie stated that the Graduate Council should get involved and other Council members voiced their agreement.

Brief discussion followed regarding the role of the Graduate Council which led to the question of the role of the Graduate Dean. Dr. Rabideau stated that the job description for the Graduate Dean has been based on an older version. The search committee has tweaked the job description and Dr. Rabideau assured the Graduate Council that their input is welcome. Dr. Spencer said that she is a member of that committee and that she paid specific attention to include a statement that the Dean of the Graduate School sets policy with the Graduate Council. She offered to email the announcement with the job description.

Brief discussion followed regarding the approval power of the Dean of the Graduate School. Dr. Rabideau explained that two different models were discussed before when they had the faculty roundtable. One is a decentralized model where the Office of Graduate Studies and the College Deans, for all intents and purposes, would be the Graduate Dean, representing students; the other alternative was to have a Dean of the Graduate School.

Dr. Cossman asked what exactly College Deans are doing now that might be shifted back to the Graduate Dean. She reiterated that for the faculty, the main reason to have a Graduate Dean is to have an advocate for graduate students and graduate programs, a central voice.

Dr. Dwayne Wise answered that as part of the decentralized model, the College Deans determine extensions of study, who the employees are (graduate assistants), determine whether dissertations meet requirements, and make exceptions.

Dr. Spencer raised the question of the impact of a centralized model. Does it mean that one person, the Graduate Dean, signs every document?

Discussion followed regarding the lack of having a clear roadmap in the past. Dr. Rabideau stressed the importance of developing a roadmap that clearly outlines the duties and responsibilities of the Dean of the Graduate School. There should be no duplication of duties and responsibilities.

Ms. Rita Burrell stated that there is in fact a document that spells out exactly what the Dean of the Graduate School does and what the College Deans do. The document can be found on the website of the Office of Graduate Studies and in past Graduate Council minutes.

4. Old Business
a) Streamlining the dissertation/thesis process

Dr. Spencer stated that she sent out 100 pages of the proposed new 2006 (5th Edition) “Standards for Preparing Theses and Dissertations” electronically, with a request to direct feedback to the library.

Dr. Spencer asked Dr. Dan Reynolds from the Graduate Council Subcommittee for Streamlining the Dissertation/Thesis Process whether templates will be made. He stated that the Subcommittee is still in the process of developing templates that will be generic enough to be utilized by all students and meet the requirements set forth by the Graduate Council.

Dr. Spencer introduced Dr. Mary Ann Woolworth, Supervisor of the Format Review Process at the library, and asked her to address questions raised by the Graduate Council.

Dr. Reynolds stated that there are still problems when the library accepts something in “journal format.” He said if something is submitted in journal format and not in the approved format accepted by the library, the department still has to approve.

Dr. Woolworth said that the only problem she is aware of relates to the margin settings that are required by ProQuest for the microfilming process. Dr. Reynolds expressed the consternation of the Subcommittee about the necessity to microfilm documents when everything seems to be going in the direction of electronic processes. Discussion ensued regarding this issue and Dr. Woolworth stated that microfilming may be unnecessary in the future; libraries are working together on a national level to resolve this issue. MSU has a choice to not microfilm and can make a decision to stop this practice. Dr. Rabideau asked Dr. Woolworth to confer with Dean Coleman regarding the necessity of microfilming at MSU.

Dr. Spencer reiterated the outcome of the previous discussion:

- Templates will be created for electronic submission of thesis and dissertations.
- Dean Coleman will provide feedback regarding the necessity and/or continuation of microfilming.

Dr. Spencer asked whether consensus was reached regarding all-electronic thesis/dissertation submission versus a paper-copy after Graduate Coordinators and GSA members had a chance to discuss and provide feedback.

Motion was made by Dr. John Boyle and seconded by Dr. Reynolds to require that all thesis and dissertations be submitted electronically beginning with the Spring 2007 semester.

Motion was accepted.

Dr. Spencer had to leave and Dr. Boyle took over.

b) Electronic Application Process Review

Dr. Boyle asked Dr. William Person to provide a status report of the electronic application process.

Dr. Person stated that a taskforce was created to specifically look at this issue. A meeting is scheduled for November 27, 2006, to talk about the front-end process. One of the problems discovered is that applications, particularly from Continuing Education, are being held until the application packet is complete and only then is the application forwarded to graduate admissions in the Office of Graduate Studies. MSU Information Technology Services (ITS) informed the taskforce that many decisions, for example where application materials are going to be received, will have to be made before any workflows can be developed to facilitate a fully electronic application process.

Dr. Person explained that the workflow process does not start until the information is entered into the Banner system. Decisions will have to be made regarding the number of sites where we enter admissions data. The taskforce will collaborate with the outside consulting firm and ITS specialist Mr. Tommy Parker to get the necessary steps in place for implementation.

Dr. Person stated that the process for submitting letters of recommendation electronically is almost complete and this part of the electronic application process may be implemented as early as December. At that point, everything except the transcript can be received electronically.

The majority of hard-copy documents that arrive at OGS are transcripts. However, in collaboration with ITS and an outside consulting firm, a process is being developed that calls for electronic imaging (scanning) of hardcopy documents such as transcripts.

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. Applicants will know their application status and which documents have been received, making repeated calls to various offices unnecessary. However, applicants will not be able to see the actual letters of recommendations, only that the letter has been completed and received.
c) Leadership Minor for Graduate Students

Dr. Peter Rabideau, Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs, gave the following background information and 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.

Dr. Rabideau explained that he discussed the issue with Dr. Robert Foglesong where he stressed the difficulty for graduate students to complete a minor within their narrowly defined program. Dr. Foglesong now has reservations about a leadership minor.

Discussion followed regarding the ease of implementing a certificate versus a minor. 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.

Dr. Rabideau asked Dr. Cade Smith from the Appalachian Leadership Honors Program to provide feedback regarding the inclusion of graduate students in a leadership program.

5. No report from the University Committee on Courses and Curricula (UCCC)

Dr. Rabideau stated that the online master of engineering program was approved by the Institutions of Higher Learning with some discussion. Two other programs we have submitted for approval have been contested by the University of Southern Mississippi. The online master of engineering program is aimed at professional engineers and, therefore, does not compete with other institutions’ recruitment of graduate students for that discipline.

6. Report from Graduate Studies (OGS)

Dr. William Person presented the following report:

a) Proposals are being finalized in one single discipline and two multidisciplinary areas to be submitted to the U.S. Department of Education for the Graduate Assistance in Areas of National Need (GAANN) program. If fully funded, a total of 15 GAANN Fellowships will be available for doctoral students, beginning August 15, 2007.

b) Both international and domestic graduate applications are up for Spring 2007 as of November 13, 2006, in comparison to the same time last year. To date, we have received a total of 72 more applications and admitted a total of 89 more students.
Dr. Rabideau asked whether our distribution of international students followed the national trend. Discussion followed, and it was confirmed that the majority of our international students come from India and China, as is the national trend.

6. Report from Graduate Student Association (GSA)

   Mr. Curtis Matherne, GSA president, presented the following report:

   During the final meeting for this semester on November 16, a date for the Research Symposium was set for Friday, March 30, 2007. GSA is working on finalizing the logistical aspects of the events. Abstracts for the Symposium are due on March 2, 2007. More information will be forthcoming via email, website and print media.

   A brief discussion followed regarding the next Graduate Council meeting which is scheduled for December 8, 2006 – the same day as commencement ceremonies. Dr. Person will check with Dr. Spencer, and an email will be sent if she concurs to cancel the meeting.

   Meeting adjourned at 2:30 p.m.

   In lieu of a December meeting, the next Graduate Council meeting will be held on January 26, 2007, at 1:30 p.m., in the Conference Room at 611 Allen Hall.