1. Dr. Juan Silva asked for a motion to accept the minutes (October 22, 2010).

Motion to accept the minutes was made by Dr. David Lewis and seconded by Dr. Meghan Millea.

Minutes were approved by acclamation.

Dr. Silva introduced and welcomed Dr. William Kibler, Vice President for Student Affairs. Dr. Kibler presented a response to the Aiken Village letter received from Graduate Council and answered questions.

Dr. Kibler referred to the response letter (see Attachment) which was disseminated to Graduate Council members and stated that going straight to questions may be more productive.

Drs. Lewis and Meghan Millea requested that reports of these assessments be made available for transparency.

There are 30 apartments in Arbor Acres that could serve as housing for students with families. This possibility is being investigated.

Dr. Reynolds asked about the lack of public transportation and how that would impact students, especially international students. Dr. Kibler responded that a number of initiatives are being reviewed since the city of Starkville is unable to provide public transportation. The MSU Transportation Department has approached Starkville apartment complexes to invite them to sign on to shuttle service to MSU which would attract MSU students as potential tenants.
Dr. Kibler introduced a new website http://offcampushousing.msstate.edu/ that was created to assist Mississippi State University students to find off-campus housing.

A discussion followed. While the website and establishment of an office dedicated to the support of housing needs for students is helpful, there are many details unique to international students that are not addressed. For example, how would an international student get an apartment in Starkville without any references, credit rating and often, no credit card? Graduate Council members voiced their concerns with oversimplifying the self-reliance of international students in terms of finding housing and meeting daily living needs without the assistance of the university, especially when internationalization is now a goal for MSU.

2. University Committee on Courses and Curricula (UCCC)

No Report – UCCC meeting was held at the same time as Graduate Council.

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

Dr. Louis D’Abramo presented the following report:

- Graduate Recruitment Assistance Grants (GRAGs)
  Proposals from 19 departments in 6 colleges were received and a total of $26,900 was awarded. The maximum amount awarded is $2,000.

- Travel Assistant Grants for Graduate Students (TAGGS)
  The OGS received 46 TAGGS requests for funding to support travel for graduate students to present at national and/or international meetings from November 1, 2010 to April 30, 2011. 20 requests have been granted, totaling $19,050. All available funding has been awarded for the current application period. The next application period begins on March 15, 2011 for travel from May 1 to October 31, 2011. The OGS has provided a total of $54,400 in travel support to graduate students since the TAGGS program was inaugurated in the fall 2009 semester.

- Fall 2010 Graduation- Number of Students
  A total of 295 graduate students applied for fall 2010 graduation, 218 masters, 5 educational specialists and 51 Ph.D.’s. Friday, November 19 (today) is the last day to apply for graduation. Currently, 51 Ph.D.’s have applied but 10 have yet to submit their dissertations to the library and one failed the defense; accordingly the number of graduate students that will be awarded Ph.D. degrees is estimated to be 40.

- Applications/Admissions to Graduate School
  Fall 2010 applications increased by 8 % relative to fall 2009 and admissions increased by approximately 1.6 %. Through November 15, applications and admission for the spring 2011 are higher than those of spring 2010. The number of applications for spring admission has
increased by 11.0 % and admissions have increased by 15.2 %, from 263 to 303. AOCE applications and admissions for spring 2011 have increased 34.7 and 39.7 %, respectively. It’s early but fall 2011 applications are up by 17 % relative to fall 2010.

• Health Insurance for Graduate Students
For fall 2010, 529 Graduate Assistants received the health insurance supplement which totaled $119,200. This number represents 45.8 % of the graduate assistants. The total health insurance subsidy provided by the university is $ 400, $200 for the fall semester and $200 for the spring/summer semester. The actual annual cost is $ 1178 so the student receives 34 % of the total cost on an annual basis.

• Recruiting Activities
Dr. William A. Person visited with 18 students who attended the Graduate and Professional School Fair at Tuskegee University on Thursday, October 21st. Follow-up letters have been sent to each of these students and to appropriate MSU department heads and graduate coordinators requesting that they contact these students.

During the fall semester, Julie Goodin participated in 11 recruitment fairs to promote graduate education at MSU. A total of 168 potential students (Alabama: 90, Georgia: 52, Louisiana: 12, MSU: 14) expressed interest in pursuing graduate education. The OGS will continue to promote graduate education at MSU to these potential students and encourage them to apply via email as well as track the number of students who demonstrated interest that eventually submit an application to evaluate the success of this recruitment initiative. Graduate coordinators will receive a list of students who expressed interest in their program areas to further foster relationships with these potential students.

• Office of the Graduate School – Application for Award
The Office of the Graduate School submitted an application to be considered for the 2010-2011 Conference of Southern Graduate Schools/Educational Testing Services (CSGS/ETS) Award for Excellence and Innovation in Graduate Admissions. The Office of the Graduate School, with the assistance of ITS, is particularly proud of its accomplishment of the transition from a paper-based to electronic based graduate student application and admission process. The transition has occurred over five years and will be fully implemented in January 2011. If selected, our institution will be recognized at the annual conference of the Council Southern Graduate Schools in February 2011.

• Electronic Processing of Applications
Poultry Science and Animal Nutrition screening packages are now being processed electronically. Setup information for Landscape Architecture, Plant and Soil Sciences, and Agriculture Economics has been sent to ITS.

• Alliance of Graduate Education in Mississippi (AGEM) Activities
Five AGEM doctoral scholars traveled to the Southern Regional Education Board 2010 Compact for Faculty Diversity Institute on Teaching and Mentoring Conference that was held in Tampa, Florida on October 27-31, 2010. There were over 1000 doctoral students of
color from throughout the country in attendance; however, the majority of these students were from the Southeastern part of the United States

Ms. Shawanda Stanford, AGEM Doctoral Scholar in Biological Sciences, provided a presentation about her current research during the November 5, 2010 First Friday Networking Meeting.

- **Graduate Teaching Assistant Certification Program**
  The Graduate Teaching Assistant (GTA) Orientation and Microteaching Simulation/Evaluation for Classroom Certification components of the Graduate Teaching Assistant Certification Program will be held on January 3 and 4, 2011, in the Rogers Auditorium at McCool Hall. During these components of the GTA certification program, graduate students may obtain GTA1, GTA2, or GTA3 certification required for holding a Graduate Teaching Assistantship appointment beginning next semester. International students may fulfill the prerequisite requirement of participating in the Classroom Culture and Communication (CCC) Workshop and obtaining Classroom English Certification by enrolling in ESL 5313 and demonstrating adequate spoken English and/or compensation skills necessary to be effective instructors in the US University environment, as determined staff evaluators from the Office of International Education during the microteaching simulation. The international students cleared by IE staff may hold a GTA1 or GTA2 appointment during the spring semester while enrolled in ESL 5313 but are ineligible to hold an appointment during this time as the instructor of record (GTA3). Information about the program components and online registration will be available on the OGS web site soon. Details will also be disseminated to department heads and graduate coordinators via email when the online registration link is active.

- **Graduate Student Orientation**
  The OGS will host an orientation session for incoming graduate students on January 4, 2011 at 1:30 pm in the Taylor Auditorium at McCool Hall. Please encourage the students who will begin programs in your department this spring to attend.

- **Recommendations of the Graduate Council to Provost and Executive Vice President Gilbert**
  Next week I will prepare two Graduate Council recommendations that will be submitted to Provost and Executive Vice President Gilbert for approval. One recommendation addresses the use of the higher of two TOEFL or IELTS scores as part of an application for admission to graduate school. The other addresses a change in the wording on diplomas awarded to graduate students whereby the Graduate School is appropriately recognized.

5. **Report from Graduate Student Association (GSA)**

GSA President Luke Fowler presented the following report:

GSA held a meeting on October 25, approximately 40 to 45 graduate students attended. Associate Registrar Ms. Sharon Nobles introduced the CAPPS (Curriculum, Advising,
and Program Planning) system which will be implemented for graduate students in the near future and she received a lot of positive feedback from graduate students.

GSA awarded two GSA travel awards this past month to two doctoral students to attend regional meetings.

The GSA Symposium is scheduled for January 29, 2011. The call for papers will go out very shortly. The next GSA meeting is scheduled for the end of January.

6. Old Business

a) Graduate Student Grievance Process (Subcommittee Report Dr. Dooley)

Grievance Subcommittee Chair Dr. Kathy Dooley was not able to attend the meeting. A subcommittee report will be presented at the next meeting.

b) Conditional Language Admission (Subcommittee Report Monts)

A subcommittee consisting of Dr. David Monts, Dr. Stephen Cottrell, Dr. Rafael Hernandez, Ms. Molly Watkins and Ms. Betsy Mordecai reviewed current admission policy. Subcommittee Chair Dr. Monts presented the following report:

Charge to the Subcommittee:

Current MSU graduate policy does not permit sponsored international students to be admitted to a graduate program contingent upon successful completion of the English Proficiency admission requirements at MSU’s English as a Second Language Center (ESL Center). The Subcommittee is to consider if this policy should be modified and if so, to suggest changes to the current policy.

General Recommendations of the Subcommittee:

The Subcommittee recommends that a modified version of the current policy available to undergraduate international students (MSU 2010-2011 Bulletin, pp. 8-9) be adopted for sponsored international students, specifically those that have direct or indirect financial support from their government.

Outline of Proposed Procedure:

- As part of application process, international applicant indicates that s/he has financial support. This information is required so that application can be officially considered without a TOEFL/IELTS score or if the TOEFL/IELTS score is below the minimum for regular admission. Note that the Graduate School currently provides information about “self funding” on the electronic screening form.
- The appropriate graduate program evaluates the application and determines if the student has met the requirements for admission (other than demonstrated English
proficiency) and determines whether or not to recommend the student for contingent admission. It is recommended that the graduate program contact the applicant in order to inquire about the source and amount (full/partial) of funding.

- If the graduate program decides to recommend contingent admission, the Subcommittee recommends that (1) Admit/No Money option for admission be utilized and (2) the applicant be informed of the need to provide financial aid documentation and also the conditions that must be met in order to satisfy the contingency.

- If the applicant is recommended for contingent admission, the student must arrange with the funding agency to provide the Graduate School with documentation verifying their financial support and its conditions. The form required to obtain a visa (I-20 or DS-2019, as appropriate) is not issued until the applicant has provided the financial support information.

- Upon arriving at MSU, the student’s English proficiency will be evaluated by the MSU ESL Center. Based upon that evaluation, ESL courses will be chosen for the student. It is currently anticipated that the average time needed to complete the English proficiency requirements will be about 12 months; but that given the student’s initial English proficiency, the time could be as short as three months (one semester/term) or as long as 15 months. The MSU ESL Center will act as advisor to the student until they complete their English proficiency requirements; at which time, the advising of the student will switch to their graduate program.

- The student will not be allowed to take non-ESL classes until they have completed their English proficiency requirement.
- If a student does not pass all ESL classes in which they are enrolled, they will be terminated from their graduate program.
- Once an international student has satisfied the English proficiency admission requirements (and any other contingency conditions that the graduate program may have), the student’s admission status changes from “contingent” to “regular admit.”

Specific Recommendations of the Subcommittee:

1. Modify the on-line graduate application so that Funding is a required field. Applicants would not be required at that time to submit Sponsor Declaration form (or bank statement), but only to select one of: Fully Funded/Partially Funded/No Funding.

2. In the Bulletin of the Graduate School, modify the “English Language Requirements for International Students” section (p. 42 of 2010-2011 Bulletin) by addition of the following to the paragraph that begins “Exceptions to the required score include the following requirements:”

   International students with approved funding who meet all admission requirements except for a TOEFL/IELTS score may apply for admission to a graduate program contingent upon their successful completion of the English as a
Second Language (ESL) program at MSU’s ESL Center. Students who successfully complete the English as a Second Language program will be considered to have demonstrated English language proficiency and will then be allowed to register in academic courses for their graduate program.

3. In order to provide U.S. Department of State officials and financial sponsoring organizations with documentation on the I-20 form of acceptance of the applicant into a graduate program, the Graduate School, on the behalf of the university, will issue “contingent” I-20 forms to the successful applicants.

4. The Subcommittee has identified one potential bottleneck for the implementation of this procedure—understaffing in Graduate Admissions. The number of graduate applications that MSU receives has significantly increased over the past few years and is expected to increase further. Receipt of graduate application materials is not evenly distributed over the year, but rather is typically concentrated in certain times of the year. As a consequence, the Graduate School has adopted a process in order of date received policy. Although the number of graduate applications has significantly increased, the number of staff processing international graduate applications has decreased from four to two. Consequently, MSU is losing well qualified applicants to other universities that can process the application materials more quickly and hence make admission decisions in a more timely fashion. The Subcommittee believes that increased staffing is required for both domestic and international graduate admissions in order for MSU to increase its graduate programs at a rate consistent with the planned growth of the university.

A motion to accept the recommendations of the subcommittee and adopt the Conditional Language Admission policy was made by Dr. Lewis. The motion was seconded by Dr. Hart Bailey.

Discussion followed. Should the initial immigration document for Conditional Language Admission be issued by the Graduate School or by the ESL Center? If the ESL center would issue the document, the student would be locked into taking 18 hours of ESL classes regardless of his or her ability as determined by testing after arrival. Therefore, it would be better if the immigration document would be issued by the Graduate School.

Graduate Council voted and the Conditional Language Admission policy was approved by acclamation.

Dr. D’Abramo revisited the Graduate Diploma issue and suggested a compromise in the wording of the diploma that will include the name of the college as well as the Graduate School. Dr. Lewis volunteered to work with a digital copy of the diploma and develop a new layout. This issue will be discussed again during the December meeting.

7. New Business
No new business was submitted but Dr. D’Abramo introduced several issues that will be discussed during the December meeting.

Meeting adjourned at 3:17 p.m.

The date for the next Graduate Council meeting has been set for Monday, December 6, 2010, at 10:00 a.m. in 611 Allen Hall.
REPORT OF THE GRADUATE COUNCIL SUBCOMMITTEE
On Consideration of Conditional Language Admission

Charge to the Subcommittee:

Current MSU graduate policy does not permit sponsored international students to be admitted to a graduate program contingent upon successful completion of the English Proficiency admission requirements at MSU’s English as a Second Language Center (ESL Center). The Subcommittee is to consider if this policy should be modified and if so, to suggest changes to the current policy.

General Recommendations of the Subcommittee:

The Subcommittee recommends that a modified version of the current policy available to undergraduate international students (MSU 2010-2011 Bulletin, pp. 8-9) be adopted for sponsored international students, specifically those that have direct or indirect financial support from their government.

Outline of Proposed Procedure:

- As part of application process, international applicant indicates that s/he has financial support. This information is required so that application can be officially considered without a TOEFL/IELTS score or if the TOEFL/IELTS score is below the minimum for regular admission. Note that the Graduate School currently provides information about “self funding” on the electronic screening form.
- The appropriate graduate program evaluates the application and determines if the student has met the requirements for admission (other than demonstrated English proficiency) and determines whether or not to recommend the student for contingent admission. It is recommended that the graduate program contact the applicant in order to inquire about the source and amount (full/partial) of funding.
- If the graduate program decides to recommend contingent admission, the Subcommittee recommends that (1) Admit/No Money option for admission be utilized and (2) the applicant be informed of the need to provide financial aid documentation and also the conditions that must be met in order to satisfy the contingency.
- If the applicant is recommended for contingent admission, the student must arrange with the funding agency to provide the Graduate School with documentation verifying their financial support and its conditions. The form required to obtain a visa (I-20 or DS-2019, as appropriate) is not issued until the applicant has provided the financial support information.
- Upon arriving at MSU, the student’s English proficiency will be evaluated by the MSU ESL Center. Based upon that evaluation, ESL courses will be chosen for the student. It is currently anticipated that the average time needed to complete the English proficiency requirements will be about 12 months; but that given the student’s initial English proficiency, the time could be as short as three months (one semester/term) or as long as 15 months. The MSU ESL Center will act as advisor to the student until they complete their English proficiency requirements; at which time, the advising of the student will switch to their graduate program.
- The student will not be allowed to take non-ESL classes until they have completed their English proficiency requirement.
- If a student does not pass all ESL classes in which they are enrolled, they will be terminated from their graduate program.
• Once an international student has satisfied the English proficiency admission requirements (and any other contingency conditions that the graduate program may have), the student’s admission status changes from “contingent” to “regular admit.”

Specific Recommendations of the Subcommittee:

1. Modify the on-line graduate application so that Funding is a required field. Applicants would not be required at that time to submit Sponsor Declaration form (or bank statement), but only to select one of: Fully Funded/Partially Funded/No Funding.

2. In the Bulletin of the Graduate School, modify the “English Language Requirements for International Students” section (p. 42 of 2010-2011 Bulletin) by addition of the following to the paragraph that begins “Exceptions to the required score include the following requirements:”:

• International students with approved funding who meet all admission requirements except for a TOEFL/IELTS score may apply for admission to a graduate program contingent upon their successful completion of the English as a Second Language (ESL) program at MSU’s ESL Center. Students who successfully complete the English as a Second Language program will be considered to have demonstrated English language proficiency and will then be allowed to register in academic courses for their graduate program.

3. In order to provide U.S. Department of State officials and financial sponsoring organizations with documentation on the I-20 form of acceptance of the applicant into a graduate program, the Graduate School, on the behalf of the university, will issue “contingent” I-20 forms to the successful applicants.

4. The Subcommittee has identified one potential bottleneck for the implementation of this procedure—understaffing in Graduate Admissions. The number of graduate applications that MSU receives has significantly increased over the past few years and is expected to increase further. Receipt of graduate application materials is not evenly distributed over the year, but rather is typically concentrated in certain times of the year. As a consequence, the Graduate School has adopted a process in order of date received policy. Although the number of graduate applications has significantly increased, the number of staff processing international graduate applications has decreased from four to two. Consequently, MSU is losing well qualified applicants to other universities that can process the application materials more quickly and hence make admission decisions in a more timely fashion. The Subcommittee believes that increased staffing is required for both domestic and international graduate admissions in order for MSU to increase its graduate programs at a rate consistent with the planned growth of the university.

Respectfully submitted:

David Monts, Arts and Sciences, Chair
Stephen Cottrell, Office of International Program Development
Rafael Hernandez, Engineering
Betsy Mordecai, International Graduate Admissions
Molly Watkins, International Education
November 8, 2010

Dr. Juan L. Silva  
Chair, MSU Graduate Council  
Department of Food Science, Nutrition and Health Promotion  
Box 9805  
Mississippi State, MS 39762-9805

Dear Dr. Silva:

Dr. Keenum requested that I respond to your letter of October 22, 2010 regarding the closing of Aiken Village. I will address first the decision to close the Aiken Village Apartments and then the planning process that is underway for the future of student housing at Mississippi State.

I agree with you and the Graduate Council that Aiken Village has provided an important housing option at MSU, particularly for graduate international students and their families. Unfortunately the Aiken Village Apartments are nearly 50 years old and the condition of the buildings requires us to make plans to abandon them. Professional assessments of the buildings have determined that renovations to bring these buildings up to current code requirements would be more costly than taking them down and re-building them. The poor quality of the facilities has resulted in a significantly lowered demand for these apartments for several years. In fact, we are not able to fill these apartments with graduate students or international students or students with families. Nearly thirty percent of the residents of Aiken Village are undergraduate students that were assigned as overflow from other residence halls because there is not sufficient demand from international, graduate, or students with families. The overwhelming majority of those students are opting to live in the city rather than on campus.

There are many competing needs for additional on-campus housing at Mississippi State University. Included among those demands are the housing needs for upper class students, graduate students and more specifically international students, and students with families. Planning and building additional student housing on campus is a complex, lengthy and expensive process. Earlier this semester, the Division of Student Affairs formed the "Future of MSU Student Housing Planning Group." The purpose of this planning group is to assist Student Affairs in developing priorities for the future of student housing at MSU. The planning group membership includes faculty (5), students (4), and staff from budget & planning (2), facilities (2), academic affairs (3), research (1), campus master plan (1) and student affairs (1). I have attached the purpose statement and membership of the planning group for your information. The
broad diversity of membership on this planning group will help assure that we consider a wide spectrum of viewpoints in developing future on campus housing priorities. As the enrollment at Mississippi State continues to grow, it is important that we develop a strategic plan for addressing the future housing needs of all MSU students. Full consideration of the on campus housing needs of graduate students, international students, and students with families will be an important part of the planning group’s work.

If it would be helpful for me to visit with the members of the Graduate Council about these issues, I will be happy to attend one of your future meetings. Thank you very much for your letter.

Sincerely,

Bill Kibler
Vice President for Student Affairs

CC: Dr. Mark Keenum
    Dr. Jerry Gilbert
Planning Group

FUTURE OF MSU STUDENT HOUSING

Planning Group Charge:

The Future of MSU Student Housing Planning Group should be representative of the campus community. Faculty, staff, students (undergraduate and graduate), academic affairs, budget and planning, facilities, campus master planning, and student affairs should be represented.

The group should consider the MSU student housing priorities for the future in light of projected enrollment growth and the developing long-term campus master plan. The group should participate in briefing and input sessions on the following areas:

1. Assessment of current on campus student housing.
2. Planning implications for projected enrollment growth.
3. Market assessment of projected on campus student housing demands.
5. Integration of academics/instruction/learning communities in on campus student housing.
6. Consideration of student housing trends in the Starkville community.
7. Funding models for on campus student housing.
8. Student housing priorities for the future.

Ultimately the group will help develop the next long term strategic plan for on campus student housing at Mississippi State University.

Planning Group Membership:
Dr. Hart Bailey, Associate Professor, Veterinary Pathobiology & President, Faculty Senate
Roger Baker, Campus Master Planner, Facilities Management
Wayne Bland, Associate Vice President for Budget & Planning
Patricia Cox, Associate Director of Regulatory Compliance and Safety & Biosafety Officer
Dr. Lou D’Abramo, Dean of the Graduate School & Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs
Dr. Jerry Emison, Associate Professor, Political Science and Public Administration & Chairman,
University Resources Committee, Faculty Senate
Drew Fowler, Student Association, Administrative Liaison
Dr. Jerry Gilbert, Executive Vice President & Provost
Libbo Haskins, Student Association, Executive Assistant
Dr. Bill Kibler, Vice President for Student Affairs (Convener)
Bob Luke, LPK Architects & Campus Master Plan Principal
Dr. Meghan Millea, Associate Professor, Economics & Vice President, Faculty Senate
Tim Muzzi, Associate Director of Facilities Management & University Architect
Dr. Linda Pote, Professor, Veterinary Basic Science
Dr. Sarah Rajala, Dean, Bagley College of Engineering
Tedrick Ratcliff, Admissions Coordinator, College of Forest Resources
Thomas Sellers, Student Body President
Nick Wilson, Graduate Student
Don Zant, Vice President for Budget & Planning

Resources:
Dr. Ann Bailey, Director of Housing & Residence Life
Bill Broyles, Assistant Vice President for Student Affairs
Tyler Brant, Associate Director of Housing & Residence Life (Budget & Finance)
Dr. Lisa Harris, Associate Vice President for Student Affairs
Fred Mock, Associate Director of Housing & Residence Life (Facilities & Maintenance)