Graduate Council Minutes
Mississippi State University

NUMBER: 5
DATE: January 18, 2002

PRESENT: J. Boyle, Chair; P. Bonfanti for C. Taylor; G. Dunaway; D. Hare; R. Harkess; T. Hosie; J. Miller; K. Paul; W. Person; C. Piper for F. Coleman; L. Reinschniedt; G. Rent; T. Schultz; R. Shivaji; C. Sides; B. Spencer; D. Welch; M. Williams for S. Watson; and D. Wolf.

ABSENT: R. Altenkirch; S. Bullington; R. Jenkins; E. Milam; C. Wang.

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 November 16, 2001.

3. There was a report from the University Committee on Courses and Curricula, which was a program modification of the Educational Specialist Degree. Dr. Stewart Watson from the Department of Counselor Education and Education Psychology was in attendance to discuss the request. Dr. Watson stated that his department is requesting to add an emphasis in Educational Psychology to the existing Educational Specialist degree (Ed.S.). The new emphasis would be more consistent with national standards, allowing the students to take national licensing examinations and to transfer their credentials from state to state. The Ed.S. is a nationally recognized degree program; whereas, the existing arrangement only allows students to be certified in the state of Mississippi. Some questions were posed and addressed. A motion was made, seconded, and passed unanimously to accept the modification.

4. In his report from the Office of Graduate Studies (OGS), Dr. William Person stated the following:
   • In December 2001, OGS hosted a demonstration of the in-house online application to which the graduate coordinators gave positive feedback.
   • A meeting for graduate coordinators and their staff assistants has been scheduled for Wednesday, January 23, 2002, from 3:00–4:30 p.m. in the Union, Small Auditorium.
   • The Alliance for Graduate Education in Mississippi (AGEM) will be hosting their annual Winter Scholar Symposium in Hattiesburg on January 24-26, 2002. Approximately 400 people (of
which approximately 300 are graduate or potential students) are pre-registered for the Symposium. Several of Mississippi State University’s faculty and students will be in attendance.

- OGS plans to participate in the Dr. Ronald E. McNair Post Baccalaureate Achievement Program RFP competition this year. The McNair program encourages first generation college students to pursue graduate degrees. If funded, it will be necessary to hire a full-time director.

5. Ms. Michele Williams, Secretary of the Graduate Student Association (GSA), made the following report:

- The first spring GSA meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, January 22, 2002.

- At Ms. Williams’ suggestion, Dr. Luther Epting, Director of the MSU Career Services Center, has worked with the Mississippi Employment Security Council to arrange the Mississippi Employment Expo. The Expo is an employment fair for companies that are interested in candidates who hold graduate degrees, and it will be held March 19, 2002, from 9:00 a.m.–3:00 p.m. at the Mississippi Trade Mart in Jackson. The Governor’s Office and the Clarion Ledger are providing part of the funding. The web address for the fair is www.mesc.state.ms.us/jobfair. Ms. Williams distributed some information about the fair to the Council members and asked them to encourage their students to attend.

- The GSA Awards Banquet will be April 24, 2002, from 5:00-9:00 p.m. at the M-Club. Nomination forms for GSA awards will be due to OGS shortly. Dr. Person stated that OGS would be contacting faculty members to assist with the screening process for the GSA awards.

6. As an item of old business, Dr. Boyle reintroduced the idea to create a new student category for students who would not be interested in receiving an advanced degree. The Council decided that this was not necessary, and the item was dismissed.

7. As an item of new business, Dr. Boyle reported that since the last meeting of the Graduate Council a meeting was held with the academic deans to discuss graduate education. Dr. George Rent, Dr. Boyle, and Dr. Person attended. Dr. Boyle distributed his memorandum regarding the input from the meetings with the deans. Dr. Rent distributed a memorandum, outlining the responsibilities of the graduate deans. Interest was expressed to schedule further meetings of the Graduate Deans and to schedule a meeting with the graduate coordinators and the Office of Graduate Studies.

8. As an item of new business, Dr Boyle introduced the idea of quality of graduate education. Dr Boyle requested that the Council return to next month’s Graduate Council meeting with ideas to promote and enhance quality graduate education at Mississippi State University. Dr. Rent reminded the Council that a listing of all graduate students with any grades of a “C” or less was distributed to the deans; each program, according to their policy for continuous enrollment, should be determining if there are students that should not be permitted to continue in the program. Dr. Craig Piper, representing the University Libraries, reported that they are committed to quality in graduate
programs. Dean Frances Coleman has met with administrators, graduate students, and the GSA President, Mr. Stevie Watson, whom she has invited to assist her with enhancing the graduate programs. Dean Coleman has shared the web site services and the document delivery system with Mr. Watson. Dr. Piper stated that the University Libraries consider it an ongoing process to help achieve excellence in graduate education, especially through technical support services for students. Several suggestions were made including the posting of an easier to find/more obvious complete listing of the electronic journals that are available, informing graduate students of the areas of the library that are set aside for them, encouraging students to attend the workshops and fairs that are specifically designed for them. Dr Piper suggested that the graduate coordinators encourage students to use the resources that are available to them at the University Libraries.

9. As an item of old business, Dr. Boyle reintroduced the issue of graduate assistant stipends being too low. Dr. Boyle requested the Council to talk about ideas. Dr. Barbara Spencer and Dr. Lynn Reinschmidt expressed concern about MSU losing doctoral students due to the low level of the stipends. Dr. Ratnasingham Shivaji suggested that the first step for Mississippi State University to take in addressing this issue would be to see what other Mississippi universities are doing, offer more competitive stipends than that group, and then move along from there. Dr. Boyle agreed with this and is going to contact the University of Southern Mississippi. Dr. Dwight Hare stated that his doctoral students receive stipends of $20,000 per year because he writes their salaries and travel money into grants. Another suggestion was to hire students as professional research assistants, allowing them to take two free classes and also have a reasonable salary. Dr. Person stated that some of our peer institutions pay student fees, which would add $1,000–1,500 per year at our institution. Dr. Boyle suggested decreasing the number of graduate students and increasing the salary, but it was stated that could result in a decrease of graduate programs if that was done. Dr. Rent stated that any money, including departmental operating funds, could be used to pay GA salaries, the actual lines on the budget are not restricting, and the department can have as many GAs as they can find. It was also suggested that a separate category that includes a tuition waiver without a stipend be added. This would free up funds, which could then be allocated for top students to receive an increased stipend. Dr. Boyle stated that this item would be revisited at next meeting.

10. As an item of new business, Dr. Boyle stated that by March 18, 2002, the Council needs to appoint a graduate faculty representative and an alternate representative to the Academic Review Board.

11. As an item of new business, Dr. Boyle would like for the Council to review the meaning of graduate faculty level I and level II status. This will be discussed at the next Council meeting.

12. Dr. Rent stated that academic program productivity reviews will be taking place. Degree programs producing less than three graduates over the last five years at the Master’s level or less than 1.5 graduates at the doctoral level will be asked to provide justification as to why these programs should continue to exist. These will be presented at the February IHL board meeting for consideration. There is a possibility that programs may be cut.
13. Dr. Shivaji stated that the students in the Department of Mathematics’ interdisciplinary programs are having difficulty taking graduate courses in their secondary area. Dr. Shivaji asked if Mississippi State University might allow a program of 18 hours graduate courses and 18 undergraduate courses. Dr. Boyle suggested that Dr. Shivaji utilize the Directed Individual Study (DIS). Dr. Hare suggested using split level courses. Ms. Dale Welch stated that a master’s student could take six hours of DIS. Dr. Shivaji stated that often some of the math courses the students need to take are in 6000 level already, so that wouldn’t work. He also stated that a lot of funding is available for interdisciplinary programs.

14. Ms. Diane Wolf stated that the expected decrease in the amount of international applications coming to the Office of Admissions did not occur. They have received more applications this year than at this time last year.

15. The meeting adjourned at 2:59 p.m.