January 31, 2014

PRESENT: Jim Adams, Amy Adkerson, Tommy Anderson, Tim Barnett, Ashli Brown-Johnson, Lori Bruce, Russell Carr, PC Cinnella, Karen Coats, Bob Wolverton (for Frances Coleman), Lara Dodds, Steve Elder, Dana Franz, Beth Miller (for David Lewis), David Morse, Dan Reynolds, Scott Roberts, Peter Ryan, Judy Schneider, Juan Silva, Kirk Swortzel, Christen Mingione (for Steve Taylor), Vemitra White, Pam Sullivan

ABSENT: Tim Chamblee (excused), Jerry Gilbert (excused), Julia Hodges, Jon Rezek, David Shaw

GUEST: Adam Love, Mike Phillips

The January 31, 2014, meeting of the Graduate Council of Mississippi State University was called to order by Chair Juan Silva at 1:30 P.M. in Room 611 of Allen Hall.

The November 22, 2013, minutes were approved following a motion by Scott Roberts and second by Dan Reynolds.

Report from University Committee on Courses and Curricula (UCCC): Kirk Swortzel, Chair Swortzel brought to Council three graduate degree proposals approved by UCCC.

- Master of Science in Kinesiology with concentrations in Exercise Physiology, Sport Administration, and Sport Pedagogy—modification
  This modification was brought to Graduate Council several months ago and subsequently returned to the department for revision. The department made changes and added a course which required UCCC approval, granted at its December meeting. Adam Love, department graduate coordinator, was present to answer questions. Lara Dodds moved the approval of the modification and Scott Roberts seconded. Council discussed the differences in the three options; Love stated that the thesis option is the academic concentration; the non-thesis option requires a DIS which provides a research component; and the internship option offers a practical, professional development focus. Karen Coats said information regarding research and professional development components of programs is required by SACS, and the proposal does a good job of providing this information. The vote was taken and the proposal passed unanimously.

- Master of Science in Agriculture with concentrations in Agronomy, Horticulture, and Weed Science—modification
- Doctor of Philosophy in Agricultural Science with concentrations in Agronomy, Horticulture, and Weed Science—modification
  Mike Phillips, department head of Plant and Soil Sciences, was present to discuss the proposals. The master’s and doctoral modifications were considered together. Both programs will require the GRE of all applicants, and the admissions requirements now state that the non-thesis option is not preparatory for admission to the Ph.D. program. The holder of a non-thesis M.S. can be admitted to the Ph.D. program as an applicant with only a bachelor’s degree. Judy Schneider moved that the proposal be approved, Tim Barnett seconded, and following discussion the motion passed unanimously.

Graduate Dean’s Report: Lori Bruce, Dean
- The Graduate Student Showcase featured Bryce Touchstone, a distance master’s student in the Department of Geosciences who lives in Australia and conducted his thesis research in Tajikistan. His faculty advisor is Dr. Kathleen Sherman-Morris. The report also featured the winners of the 3MT competition: Josh Winter (Education), first place, and Evangel Kummari (Veterinary Medicine), second place, and included complete information on this competition.

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• The Graduate Faculty Showcase recognized Dr. James E. Fowler, the Billie Ball Professor of Electrical and Computer Engineering, who has served as major professor to a number of master’s and doctoral students and has published 44 peer-reviewed journal articles. He currently serves as department graduate coordinator where he maintains the highest quality of graduate education.

• In Graduate School Updates, Bruce reported on graduate enrollment management and provided data comparing Spring 2014 applications with Spring 2013. The report also gave results from two surveys: (1) a survey of department heads and graduate coordinators regarding their perception of various factors’ impact on increasing enrollment, and (2) a survey of current graduate students about factors impacting their decision to attend graduate school at MSU. Results from both were included in the report.

• She reported that the OGS has a current opening for an Enrollment Management Coordinator who will oversee enrollment management activities, marketing graduate programs, coordinating recruitment activities, and managing communications with applicants and new students. Increasing graduate enrollment is the major objective of this position.

• The report included statistics on graduate assistantships, academic programs, and enhancement programs. MSU has four new Fulbright Fellows this year: a master’s student in sociology from South Africa; a master’s student from Germany in aerospace engineering; a doctoral student from Haiti in mathematical sciences; and a foreign language teaching assistant from China. The seven returning Fulbright Fellows include master’s students from Syria, Dominican Republic, and Kyrgyzstan in the computational engineering, animal and dairy sciences, computer science, and biological sciences programs; and doctoral students from Kenya, Colombia, and Pakistan who are in the mathematical sciences, public policy and administration, and computer science programs.

In the discussion following the report, Tommy Anderson announced that eight MSU students had applied for Goldwater Research Scholarships and four were selected to advance to the national competition. These scholarships fund pure research in the STEM disciplines. He stated that Dean Bruce and the Graduate School are supporting the research of the non-finalist applicants with a $500 scholarship to support conference travel or other research expenses. In addition, the student will be paired with a current graduate student in the same discipline.

Graduate Student Association (GSA): Vemitra White, President
White reported that the GSA’s last meeting was January 22, and Dr. Deborah Lee of Mitchell Memorial Library was the speaker. White reported on community service activities and reminded Council members of the research symposium scheduled for March 22, with abstracts due February 28. She asked the group to publicize the event in their departments and stated that they need faculty volunteers to serve as judges. GSA’s next meeting is February 21, 2014, at noon in McCool Hall.

Old Business:
• Silva recognized David Morse, chair of the MS/PhD requirement committee, for a follow-up report on the committee’s work. Morse reported that MSU’s requirements for the master’s programs are very consistent with other SEC institutions, but the doctoral programs vary widely across the SEC. MSU and Clemson are the only schools with no minimum coursework requirements; the only stated program requirement is for dissertation/research hours. Discussion followed regarding the necessity of ensuring a broad knowledge base as well as depth of knowledge. The point was made that SACS does not require a student to have 18 hours in a subject area in order to teach in that discipline, a practice that MSU follows for Graduate Teaching Assistants. Morse said that the committee will continue to meet and adopt a proposal for Graduate Council, and he asked for input from Council members.

• Roberts reported on behalf of the certificate programs committee, pointing out discrepancies among certificates. A number of those listed in the graduate bulletin are not graduate certificates; most can be earned by undergraduates or graduates, some with a mix of graduate and undergraduate courses. Some
allow a student to earn a certificate with less rigorous academic requirements than accepted by the Graduate School. The committee did not make a recommendation at this time.

New Business:

- Bruce asked for discussion regarding the policy requiring thesis students to take 50% of their coursework, exclusive of the thesis/research hours, at the 8000 level. Several Council members commented on this policy, saying it discourages students from taking more coursework at the 6000 level; an 8000-level course is not always available; and meeting the 50% ratio sometimes includes requesting an exception for .5 credit hour. Tim Barnett moved that the thesis-option policy be modified to read “A minimum of 12 credit hours of coursework, exclusive of the research/thesis hours, must be at the 8000 level or higher.” Russell Carr seconded the motion, and it was unanimously approved. The non-thesis option requirement of a minimum of 15 credits at the 8000 level is unchanged. The policy is effective Fall 2014. In discussion following the vote, Council determined that since the modified policy is less restrictive than the former requirement, it can be followed for May 2014 and August 2014 degree audits.

- Bruce next introduced the issue of the policy regarding grades of C or below, a policy revised by Council in March 2011. In the 2012-2013 bulletin the revised policy reads: “A graduate student cannot graduate with . . . or 3) more than 6 credit hours of C grades earned for all courses since admission to the program, including those outside the program of study, ... Note: C grade hours for a course that is retaken and in which the student earns a grade of B or higher will not be included in the total hours. However, the original grade is included as part of the calculation of the GPA.” In the 2013-2014 bulletin the wording was changed to read: “A graduate student cannot graduate with ... 3) more than 6 credit hours of C or lower grades earned for all courses since admission into the program, including a course that is retaken and those courses outside the program of study...” The edit was made by the Office of the Graduate School and not as a result of a second Graduate Council policy change. Council members recalled voting on the issue and said that the second, or stricter, policy was the one adopted in 2011. Following discussion, Bruce said the OGS would pull together all the information regarding this modification to determine the correct approved policy and make any necessary changes in the bulletin.

Swortzel questioned the status of a policy approved by Graduate Council in April 2013. At that meeting Council passed a policy that reads: “Students who have already taken a course at the 4000-level are not allowed to enroll in the same course for credit at the 6000 level except for those courses that are specifically approved to be taken multiple times for credit.” Dr. Lou D’Abramo, then Dean of the Graduate School, had stated that AOP 11.04 would be revised to reflect this policy upon approval by Provost Gilbert. To date, the AOP has not been revised, nor has the policy been returned to Council.

With no other business for consideration, the meeting was adjourned at 3:10 PM. The next meeting will be held on February 28, 2014, at 1:30 PM in Allen 611.