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

2. Dr. Boyle presented the minutes for the Graduate Council meeting held on January 26, 2001. A motion was made, seconded, and passed to approve the minutes, with editorial adjustments.

3. Dr. Boyle introduced Dr. Stan Spurlock, Professor of Agricultural Economics, to answer concerns the Graduate Council had from its January 26, 2001 meeting regarding the University Committee on Courses and Curricula’s (UCCC) report. Included in the report were proposals from the Department of Agricultural Economics to modify the Doctor of Philosophy degree program in Applied Economics and to modify the Master of Science degree program in Agricultural Economics.

The concerns of the Council were as follows: what would happen to the curricula if the courses were not approved, insufficient FTEs to cover the proposed changes in the Master’s program, and the Economics portion of the Ph.D. program was not yet modified as previously thought.

Dr. Spurlock explained that only the Master’s program contains courses that have not yet been approved. The Agricultural Economics Department does not have sufficient FTEs to teach the courses because of the University’s current financial situation; they did not gain the expected FTEs, and they do not expect them anytime soon. The Master’s level program is on hold until these issues are resolved; however, the department would like to be able to advertise the program. The Master’s program is important to the Agricultural Economics department because it can be used for students that are unable to complete the Ph.D. program. Dr. Steven Schoenholtz stated that because of the lack of FTEs the program modification does not need to be approved. Dr. George Rent stated that the concern for FTEs should be the concern of the department’s administration not the Graduate Council; the Council should be
Dr. Boyle disagreed with Dr. Rent, stating that the Graduate Council should consider the whole picture. Dr. Boyle stated that if the Graduate Council approved the modification of the master’s program, the Agricultural Economics Department would not be able to use their old program; if the courses turn out to not be approved, the department would be crippled. Dr. Spurlock stated that the hold up on the approval of the courses is letters from the Departments of Mathematics and Statistics and Industrial Engineering, which he requested in November. Dr. Spurlock stated that the Economics department has submitted their matching modification, and he thinks it will, perhaps, be presented at next month’s Graduate Council meeting.

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Dr. Hare made a motion to table the proposed Ph.D. modifications until the two components can be presented together. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously. Since the Graduate Council no longer considers approval of courses, it was suggested that the Master’s modification be approved pending approval of the courses. If the courses do not gain approval, the Department of Agricultural Economics will have their old program still in place. A motion was made, seconded, and passed unanimously to approve the proposed modification to the Master of Science degree in Agricultural Economics, pending approval of the proposed courses.

Dr. Person distributed a report on the 2000-2001 count of doctoral graduates. It is necessary to have 100 doctoral graduates by spring in order to maintain the University’s Doctoral Level I status with the Southern Regional Education Board. The University has graduated 54 doctoral students already this year, and 98 have applied for graduation this May. Historically, the University graduates at least 50% of those that apply. Only 46 students are needed, so there should be a few students to spare in order to meet the required 100.

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Dr. Person distributed a print out of the Office of Graduate Study’s new web site: GradAid, a site containing information on financial aid for graduate students, which went live February 23, 2001. Each academic department was asked to contribute any relevant information for the site. Resources including several foundations, federal programs, fellowships, internships, and departmental assistantships, among others, are available there. Dr. Person encouraged the Council to direct students to this resource if they are in need of financial support. Ms. Jimmie Wesley, Mr. Antonio Brownlow, and Ms. Terri Johnson designed this website. Dr. Person welcomed comments and ideas for improvement.

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two Research Assistants, and one Service Assistant. Dr. Person stated that some Graduate Council members will probably be asked to serve on the review committees for these awards.

5. As a matter of old business, Dr. Boyle introduced the issue of Graduate Faculty representation at doctoral defenses and oral examinations. He stated that for representation clear service credit could be given for use at evaluations. It was stated that if the observer could vote it would give their position more weight. Dr. Dunaway does not think representation will work. He suggested that the Deans develop more faculty participation and more University wide publicity of defenses: the Office of Graduate Study’s web page, the Memo, and the Reflector. Extensive discussion occurred as to whether or not a defense is public. The University’s policy on the publicity of theses/dissertations needs to be investigated. Dr. Dunaway was particularly impressed with the Department of Forestry’s procedures for Defenses. They have a public presentation of the research, and then the committee and the student adjourn for more pointed questions. It was stated that a seminar previous to doctoral defenses is common. The potential for outside guests would promote professionalism, and students would prepare better.

Ms. Dale Welch stated that the old policy of the Graduate School was instituted in the late 60s strictly to protect the student, but it evolved to protect the faculty. In a few cases, in the past, the committee’s decision was upheld on the basis of the outside observer. Ms. Welch stated that nothing is written about the public nature of defenses.

Dr. Schoenholtz suggested that an outside observer be sent on request. A motion was made and seconded, which stated that either a student or a faculty member may request an outside observer be present for either dissertation or thesis defense or preliminary defense. Dr. Jenkins stated that this would not work for students who do not know this is an available option. He suggested a waiver form on which a student would sign either yes or no in order to insure that each student would be aware of the option.

Dr. Boyle asked for a show of hands for the motion, which states that either a student or faculty committee member may request an outside observer for final or preliminary defense. The vote tally was 8 in favor and 2 opposed. A vote was taken to determine if the matter should be considered non-routine, which would require reconsideration of the matter at a subsequent meeting of the Graduate Council. In this case, 4 votes were needed to consider the matter non-routine. There were 3 votes to consider the matter non-routine; therefore, the motion carried and will be presented to the Provost Office.

Dr. Boyle asked for consideration of the suggested waiver form. Several options were discussed: a policy could be added to the Bulletin, a form could be added to the letter, which comes from departments to request an outside observer, or a new form could be designed and put on the Office of Graduate Study’s web site. Dr. Jenkins
made a motion to begin having a waiver form that each student must sign to indicate whether or not they want an outside observer. The motion was not seconded and died. It is stated that it is the student’s responsibility to know what is in the Bulletin, and if there is a problem the student will seek out information. Dr. Jenkins suggested a simpler form containing two check boxes on which the student would indicate either yes or no, he/she does or does not want an outside observer. Dr. Dunaway stated that students would feel compelled to check yes when presented with a document of that nature, causing the former logistics problems to resurface.

6. As an additional matter of old business, Dr. Boyle presented the University’s revision of an AOP regarding Certificate Programs to the Council. In the revised AOP, “outside the student’s major” has been removed. Some existing programs are not following the current guidelines, and this change would legitimize them. Dr. Boyle proposed an additional modification be made in order to be consistent with Bulletin: “a participant of a certificate program must maintain a 3.0 on all graduate work.” A motion was made, seconded, and passed to require a 3.0 for graduate certificate programs.

7. Dr. Person requested clarification on the requirement of the number of graduate hours that Graduate Assistants must take during the fall and spring enrollment periods. The current policy states that a graduate assistant must take at least nine graduate hours and maintain that through the semester. The course load may not be composed of undergraduate hours, unless it is a program prerequisite, in which case, one such course is permitted per semester. The Office of Graduate Studies has interpreted this to mean that a student must have 6 graduate hours accompanied by one undergraduate prerequisite. A full time graduate student is a nine-hour student. A question arises when a student has a five-hour undergraduate prerequisite because that student would then be taking only four hours of graduate level courses. Dr. Jenkins stated that a student may have several prerequisites to take and ought to be able to take those in the first semester. Dr. Person added that there are many graduate students seeking their graduate degree in a completely different area than their undergraduate degree and, therefore, will have a lot of prerequisites to take. Ms. Welch stated that when a student is not in compliance with the policy, she examines the student’s record and makes judgement calls as to whether or not the classes they are taking are legitimate. Dr. Boyle asked the Council if they have any problems with the Office of Graduate Study’s interpretation. Dr. Rent stated that “six hours” would specifically have to be added to the policy if the Office of Graduate Studies is going to require it. Dr. Boyle asked Dr. Person to bring a proposed policy, reflecting the suggested modifications, for consideration at the next Council meeting.

8. Because two electronic theses/dissertations have already been submitted, Dr. Boyle recommended holding the next Graduate Council meeting at the library in order to include a demonstration of the process.
9. Ms. Welch distributed a list that outlines the procedures followed and paperwork completed by the Office of Graduate Studies in order to enter, maintain, and graduate each graduate student.

10. At the next meeting, Dr. Boyle would like to discuss the issue of satisfactory/unsatisfactory performance. Regarding the basis of terminating a graduate student, the Bulletin includes several statements containing the word “may” which could cause problems.

11. Dr. Rent stated that each program listing in the Graduate Studies Bulletin needs to contain more specific information, including a specific number of hours. There will be a SACS review for the University’s continued accreditation in 2003, and he suggested that the Graduate Studies Bulletin be updated now to reflect these requirements.

12. The meeting was adjourned at 3:00 p.m.