Graduate Council
Mississippi State University

Number: 7
Date: February 24, 2006


Guests: B. Stokes

1. Dr. Tom Hosie called the meeting to order at 1:35 p.m. in 611 Allen Hall.

2. Dr. Hosie asked for any revisions to the minutes (January 27, 2006). Motion was made by Dr. John Boyle and seconded by Dr. Connie Forde to accept the minutes as distributed.

Motion carried.

Dr. Boyle asked if the minutes could be emailed so the Council would have sufficient time to review them. Dr. Hosie noted from this point on we will only email the minutes to the Council members.

3. UCCC Report
   - No report.

4. Report from Graduate Studies

Dr. William Person submitted the following written report to the Council:

- Following last month’s Graduate Council meeting, we decided to move the Graduate Coordinators meeting up to February 21, 2006. Items to be addressed include completion of the Graduate Coordinator Handbook and to strongly encourage the graduation of at least 39 doctoral students this spring to achieve our total of 100 for this academic year.

- Please encourage your graduate faculty not to administer comprehensive examinations to students who have more than six credit hours to complete on their program of study. Such students who are not successful on these examinations would have a valid justification for appeal.
The Faculty Senate has scheduled a roundtable on Graduate Education on Saturday, April 29, 2006, at Plymouth Bluff. I was asked to offer the names of several graduate faculty for possible participant in this event. It is my understanding that the Faculty Senate will make the final decision on graduate faculty participation. It is anticipated that our new president will participate in the roundtable. The Office of Graduate Studies is in the process of updating an information packet for the participants.

I have attached an information sheet showing the level of graduate assistantship stipends for Spring 2006 which includes the average stipend by type and overall average stipend.

Ms. Rita Burrell discussed item number two concerning administering comprehensive exams to students who have more than six credit hours to complete on their program of study. Students taking their comprehensive examinations in their last semester often have 12, 15, 16, or 18 hours of coursework when they take their examinations. This is unique to master’s and educational specialist students. Ms. Burrell distributed copies of our policy which states that students should be within six hours of completing their coursework.

Mr. Butch Stokes discussed graduate students who hold graduate assistantships and need to be continuously enrolled to complete their degrees after they have completed their coursework. Some are taking one hour of thesis dissertation and do not qualify for graduate assistantships. This spring there are 284 students who are out-of-state residents. When they lose their assistantships they are charged full tuition in-state and out-of-state. These students have entered the state for the purpose of attending MSU, and under state law they are prohibited from gaining state residency. We need to make sure advisors remind their students about this.

Discussion followed.

Dr. Colin Scanes asked that this item, Tuition Waiver for Continuously Enrolled Students, be placed on the agenda for next month. Dr. Scanes suggested a subcommittee be formed to research this issue. Dr. Boyle, Dr. Willard, Dr. Reynolds, and Ms. Burrell volunteered to serve on the subcommittee. Dr. Boyle will chair the committee.

5. Report from Graduate Student Association – Mr. Erich Chang

Mr. Chang noted the GSA Research Symposium which will be held on March 31, 2006, in the Union. The submission process for abstracts has changed this year: abstracts can be submitted online. The abstract submission deadline is March 10, 2006. There are three categories: physical sciences; social sciences and humanities; and life sciences. A $100 prize will be awarded to the first place winner in each category. An awards banquet will be held on April 25, 2006, when the awards from the Research Symposium and the graduate teaching, research, and service assistants of the year will be presented.
6. Nominations for Council Representation on Academic Review Board Committee

Dr. Hosie noted Dr. Tor Schultz is currently the representative and would like to continue to serve as the Council’s representative. Dr. Boyle nominated Dr. Schultz to serve as the Council’s representative on the Academic Review Board Committee. Dr. Barbara Spencer seconded the motion. Nominations were closed. The nomination was accepted by acclamation. Dr. Richard Harkess currently serves as the alternate and would like to continue to serve in that capacity. Dr. Boyle nominated Dr. Harkess to serve as the alternate Council’s representative. Dr. Spencer seconded the motion. Nominations were closed. The nomination was accepted by acclamation.

7. Old Business

- Report on ACE Evaluation of Military Credit --- Dr. Spencer
  Dr. Spencer and Dr. Shivaji met with Dr. Gilbert, Dr. Person, Mr. Stokes, and Ms. Burrell to establish a policy on ACE evaluation of military credit.

  “Graduate students at MSU may seek approval to receive graduate credit for military coursework evaluated by ACE. In order to receive such credit, the coursework must be evaluated and approved by the student’s major professor, graduate coordinator, and dean. Based on this assessment, the appropriate number of transfer hours and grade will be determined. If possible, equivalent MSU course numbers and names will be utilized. The courses not equivalent to MSU courses will be designated as directed individual study.”

  Discussion followed.

  MSU tuition will not be charged for this MSU course. A $25 processing fee will be charged.

  In order to limit the number of hours transferred, the policy statement was amended as follows:

  “Graduate students at MSU may seek approval to receive up to nine hours of graduate credit for military coursework evaluated by ACE. In order to receive such credit, the coursework must be evaluated and approved by the student’s major professor, graduate coordinator, and dean. Based on this assessment, the appropriate number of transfer hours and grade will be determined. If possible, equivalent MSU course numbers and names will be utilized. The courses not equivalent to MSU courses will be designated as directed individual study.”

  Dr. Boyle moved to accept the sub-committee’s policy on ACE evaluation of military credit. Dr. Ballweber seconded the motion.
Motion passed with no abstentions.

- Enhancing Graduate Education at MSU – Dr. Scanes

Dr. Scanes suggested we put the ACE evaluation of military credit policy on MSU’s website as a means of attracting students.

Dr. Scanes discussed websites. Dr. Scanes would like the following item placed on a future agenda – graduate students who do not register until the first or second week of classes. Some students do not register until after the 10th day of classes. We don’t know the number of students enrolled, and we also don’t know if the class should be taught. Dr. Scanes asked that a subcommittee be formed, that would involve Mr. Stokes, to discuss a lack of financial disincentives for students registering late; at the moment the incentive is for students to register late.

Dr. Gilbert noted he, along with Dr. Rabideau, Dr. Person, and Dr. Scanes, continue to meet to discuss ways to enhance graduate education at MSU. Dr. Gilbert discussed the following:

- Currently there is an effort in Geosciences to look at an Earth and Atmospheric Science Ph.D. We hope to have a proposal in to the UCCC by the end of the spring semester so the proposal can go to the IHL Board in July.

- The College of Engineering is looking at Environmental Engineering. A proposal will be sent in April to change the name of Civil Engineering to Civil and Environmental Engineering. After this proposal goes through, the college will then be looking at possible master’s and doctoral degrees in Environmental Science.

- The Psychology program is more difficult in terms of moving forward with a new Ph.D. program because of the Board’s view that we do not want to duplicate graduate programs. There are several Ph.D. programs in the state already. This item will be reviewed in a year.

- The certificate programs have not been addressed much.

- Dr. Gilbert and Dr. Person will be meeting with Dr. Spencer and Dr. Freedman to discuss the possibility of a distance minor in business that could be attached to other degree programs. This semester, Engineering will propose a distance graduate master’s program – a general engineering degree.

- New Business

  - Consideration of Increasing the Required Minimum Graduate Assistantship Stipend
Dr. Gilbert noted the following statement was prepared in the President’s Office:

The Provost Office will allow departments to make increases in graduate student assistantship stipends on July 1 of any year. This is regardless of whether there are state approved raises for faculty and staff.

There are two additional points to remember. First, the Office of the Provost does not manage a central pool of money for graduate student stipends. This is managed at the college and/or departmental level. Second, when raise pools are established for faculty and staff raises, money is not usually included for graduate student stipend adjustments, i.e. adjustments for graduate student stipends must usually come from revenue forces controlled by the college and/or department. This could include, of course, overhead accounts and grants/contracts as appropriate.

Discussion followed.

Dr. Gilbert noted he, along with Dr. Scanes, and Dr. Person met to discuss whether the minimum graduate stipend should be raised at MSU. Dr. Gilbert noted if the minimum stipend was raised we would have to come up with money for the departments who do not have the necessary funds from grants/contracts.

Dr. Spencer asked if raises can be given at other times besides July 1. Dr. Gilbert noted July 1 is the standard time for all salary adjustments; anything other than July 1 will be an exception.

Dr. Gilbert noted he will talk with Dr. Rabideau about adding January 1 as an additional time that raises can be given to graduate assistants.

Dr. Boyle asked about the possibility of a new add/drop policy. Dr. Gilbert noted the current policy gives students five days to add and ten days to drop. Dr. Gilbert noted the proposed add/drop date will be moved to the 5th or 6th day of classes. The drop will be one day ahead of the add. Dr. Keith Belli brought forth this proposal because the current policy has the drop day after the add day. By putting the drop date ahead of the add date, space can be created in full classes and students can add these classes.

Dr. Boyle asked if the new add/drop policy would affect the ten day probationary period that exists for students who may be potentially expelled from school. This period gives the student time to start the appeal process.

Discussion followed.

Meeting adjourned at 2:40 p.m.