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

2. Dr. Spencer asked for any revisions to the minutes (February 22, 2008).

   Motion was made by Dr. Dwayne Wise and seconded by Mr. Mark Thomas to accept the minutes.

   Minutes were approved.

3. University Committee on Courses and Curricula (UCCC)

   Two distance master’s programs and two distance doctoral programs in Computer and Electrical Engineering as well as the Distance General Biology Program were presented to the Graduate Council.

   a) Master of Science in Computer Engineering Distance Program; Master of Science in Electrical Engineering Distance Program; Doctor of Philosophy in Computer Engineering Distance Program and Doctor of Philosophy in Electrical Engineering Distance Program

   Dr. Spencer asked Ms. Rita Burrell to speak about these programs. Ms. Burrell stated that all of the distance programs were modeled after the existing distance programs in Industrial Engineering.

   Discussion followed. Dr. Peter Rabideau pointed out that MSU is required by IHL to get permission from other institutions if they are offering a class via distance learning in their region. Dr. Wise pointed out that the statement pertaining to the non-thesis option should be deleted from the Ph.D. proposals.
Dr. Wise made a motion to accept the four distance degree programs from the Bagley College of Engineering. The motion was seconded by Dr. Scott Willard.

Graduate Council voted and the motion carried by acclamation.

b) Master of Science in General Biology Distance Program
(Pre-proposal was approved at the May 14, 2007 meeting)

Dr. Spencer asked Dr. Wise to speak about the program. Dr. Wise pointed out that the General Biology Distance Program has already been pre-approved by IHL and Graduate Council. The proposal has only been changed in accordance with the recommendations suggested when the preapproval was obtained. He stated that courses will be developed over the summer to have the program in place by Fall 2008. The degree program is designed primarily for teachers and there is a need for such a program for teachers who want to advance in their careers with a master’s degree. The program is modeled after the Teachers in Geosciences Distance Program which is already in place at MSU.

Dr. Larry Barrow made a motion to accept the distance General Biology Distance Program. The motion was seconded by Mr. Mark Thomas.

Graduate Council voted and the motion carried by acclamation.

4. Report from Graduate Studies (OGS) (Handout)

Dr. William Person distributed a written report with the following information:

a) The Third Annual Super Recruitment Weekend, titled IMPETUS-PGE (Increasing Momentum to Provide Empowerment to Talented Undergraduate Students to Pursue Graduate Education), will be held April 18-19, 2008. OGS will invite 50 talented juniors and seniors from higher education institutions from Mississippi and the contiguous states to participate. Graduate Council is cordially invited to attend the Graduate Research Information Fair and the informal reception. The Graduate Research Information Fair will be held on Friday, April 18, from 1:00-2:00 p.m. in the Bost Extension Auditorium. During this fair, several graduate faculty members will showcase some of their “cutting edge” research to the potential STEM students. An informal reception will be held on Friday, April 18, at 7:00 p.m. at the Bost Extension Auditorium.

b) To date, 49 doctoral students have applied for graduation in May. At least 28 more doctoral students are needed to achieve the minimum of 100 graduates for the 2007-2008 academic year. Additionally, there are 280 master’s and 16 educational specialist applicants for a total of 345 for May 2008 graduation.

c) Graduate students who can obtain library approval for their theses/dissertations on or before May 23, 2008, will not be required to enroll in any credit hours during the summer semester to graduate in August; however, the student will be required to apply for graduation in August 2008 by the June 13 deadline.
d) The third Fulbright Preacademic Program for up to 46 international graduate students will be July 19 – August 9, 2008. This grant is funded by the Institute of International Education (IIE).

e) The dates for the International Teaching Assistant (ITA) and General Teaching Assistant (GTA) workshops are August 4 – 8 and August 11-12, 2008, respectively. The New Graduate Student Orientation has been scheduled for Wednesday, August 13, 2008, at 1:30 p.m.

5. Report from Graduate Student Association (GSA)

Mr. Thomas, GSA president, presented the following report:

Mr. Robert Cadenhead from the Student Health Center came to the GSA meeting on March 27, 2007 to talk about student health insurance. He has several bids in and there will be a meeting with GSA officers on Monday, March 31, to talk about those bids.

The GSA Research Symposium is scheduled for Friday, April 4, 2008 at the Colvard Student Union. Mr. Thomas invited anyone interested in being a judge to please come forward. He stated a large number of participants in the poster competition resulted in a shortage of easels for display. Dr. Wise suggested to check with the Life Sciences/Biotechnology Institute, they have a number of easels.

The GSA Awards Banquet is scheduled for April 22, 2008. Assistantship award nominations are due on April 4, 2008.

6. Old Business

a) Graduate Dean Search (item not on agenda)

Dr. Spencer asked Dr. Barrow, a member of the Search Committee, to provide an update regarding the search. He stated that 26 applications have been received. Those applications are being filtered down and the search is in process. He noted that there are some great candidates.

b) OGS Website Analysis (Handout)

Dr. Barrow stated that approximately 30 graduate students participated in a survey that compared the OGS website to peer institution websites and the OGS website rating was on par with the average rating of those websites. He said that he received feedback from Ms. Julie Goodin who had collected input from the OGS staff regarding the OGS website. Dr. Barrow stated that a more complete report will be compiled from the data and presented at the next Graduate Council meeting.
c) Election of Academic Review Board Representative and Alternate

Dr. Person explained that two graduate faculty members serve on the Academic Review Board and those members are normally elected by the Graduate Council. They do not have to be members of the Graduate Council but they do have to be graduate faculty members, level 1 is preferred. Drs. Tor Schultz and Richard Harkness previously served in this capacity. Both of them were contacted by the Graduate School and they are willing to continue to serve pending their election by the Graduate Council.

Dr. Wise moved that the current representatives (Drs. Schultz and Harkness) be reelected to serve on the Academic Review Board. Dr. Ratnasingham Shivaji seconded the motion.

Graduate Council voted and the motion carried by acclamation.

8. New Business

a) Policy for Changing Concentrations

Dr. Spencer asked Dr. Peter Ryan, Graduate Coordinator of Animal Physiology, to speak about this issue. Dr. Ryan stated that the current policy is not student friendly when a student wishes to change concentrations within an umbrella program, or even change programs altogether, because the student is required to complete another application and pay another application fee. At the undergraduate level, all students need to do is fill out a form to change their majors. Is there a way to make this process less cumbersome for the student and the departments?

Discussion followed. Dr. Spencer stated that she agreed that changing concentrations could be more simplified. However, she raised concern regarding the change of degree programs without a new application. Some concerns were expressed by Graduate School staff members regarding proper documentation and recordkeeping.

Could the issue be solved by using a transfer form that would document the change and require the signature of the student, the prior graduate coordinator, the new graduate coordinator and a Graduate School Representative? It was determined that the decision of what a student who wishes to transfer into a program is required to do lies with the department the student wants to transfer into. These requirements may be the submission or test scores, new statement of purpose, new recommendation letters, or a new application altogether.

Dr. Person stated that the Graduate School is willing to facilitate measures that may make the process easier for the student. However, he also stated that the recordkeeping function of the Graduate School must be adhered to and the increasingly electronic method of dealing with applications, such as the workflow process, must also be taken into account.
March 28, 2008

It was determined that the Graduate School will work with Dr. Ryan and develop a transfer form. A draft of the form will be presented at a future Graduate Council meeting.

b) Graduate Faculty/Student Ethics (Handouts)

Dr. Spencer asked Dr. Ryan to speak to this issue as well. Dr. Ryan stated that Graduate Coordinators sometimes find themselves as mediators between graduate students and their major professors, or mentors. He noted that there is a lot of information available regarding the ethical conduct of graduate students at Mississippi State University. However, when he searched the OGS website for a Rights and Responsibility statement that includes the mentor/major professor, and an outline of what a graduate student can expect during his/her course of study, nothing of that nature could be found. A graduate student should receive quality guidance and proper mentoring while completing his/her degree in accordance with the ethical standards the institution set forth. Graduate students, especially if they are international, are extremely vulnerable because they are dependent on the major professor monetarily and academically.

Dr. Ryan stated that ethics statements have been used or are in the developmental stages by various departments. He pointed out that a rights and responsibility statement that encompasses ethical policies for all graduate faculty and graduate students would benefit both entities. Dr. Ryan referred to a similar document currently in use at Rutgers University.

Discussion followed. Dr. Don Jackson suggested that prospective graduate students be given contact information of former graduate students before they sign up to study under a faculty member. Dr. Shivaji acknowledged that a Rights and Responsibilities document will not solve all the problems between faculty members and their graduate students but it will certainly help to have such a document. Dr. Rabideau offered to disseminate the document to all new faculty. It was suggested to include something about the Rights and Responsibilities of Graduate Students and Graduate Faculty in the Graduate Bulletin. Dr. Barrows suggested that the Graduate Student Association draft a “Bill of Rights” for graduate students to submit to the Graduate Council.

It was decided that a Rights and Responsibilities document for graduate faculty and graduate students alike should be developed. A subcommittee consisting of Dr. Person, Dr. Ryan, Dr. Wise, Dr. Shivaji, Ms. Shlynn Morris, Ms. Karin Lee and a GSA representative will be formed to draft the document and report back to Graduate Council.

Meeting adjourned at 3:05 p.m.

The next Graduate Council meeting will be held at 1:30 p.m. on April 25, 2008, at 611 Allen Hall.