1. Dr. Barbara Spencer called the meeting to order at 1:30 p.m. in 611 Allen Hall.

2. Dr. Spencer inquired whether it was necessary to meet in May. Members of the Graduate Council concurred it was not necessary to meet and Dr. Dwayne Wise made a motion to officially cancel the May Graduate Council meeting. Dr. Larry Barrow seconded the motion and the May 16, 2008 Graduate Council meeting was officially cancelled.

3. Dr. Spencer asked for any revisions to the minutes (March 28, 2008).

   Dr. Wise asked that Dr. Ratnasingham Shivaji’s name be added to the Graduate Council Ethics Subcommittee listed on page 5 of the minutes. His name was inadvertently omitted and will be added back.

   Motion was made by Dr. Wise and seconded by Dr. Nick Younan to accept the minutes with the noted amendment above.

   Minutes were approved.

4. University Committee on Courses and Curricula (UCCC)

   UCCC meeting coincided with this Graduate Council meeting so Dr. Tim Chamblee could not present a report.

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

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

   a) To date, 370 graduate students have applied for graduation in May. Of this number, 54 are doctoral applicants, and 45 of these applicants are expected to complete their degrees.
If so, the total number of doctoral graduates for the 2007-2008 academic year would be 117.

b) The Third Annual Super Recruitment Weekend, titled IMPETUS-PGE (Increasing Momentum to Provide Empowerment to Talented Undergraduate Students to Pursue Graduate Education), was held April 18-19, 2008. A total of 21 talented juniors and seniors from higher education institutions from Mississippi and the contiguous states participated in the program.

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.

f) The AGEM Summer Graduate Bridge Program has been scheduled for July 7 through August 6, 2008. This program is designed for new master’s and doctoral students from underrepresented groups in the STEM areas.

g) In an effort to better inform both holders of graduate assistantships and departments of the policies and procedures regarding summer graduate assistantship appointments, an information form was prepared and circulated this week to all academic and administrative units. This form should be submitted with the assistantship documents for summer only.

h) With the assistance of the Office of Institutional Research (IR) the Graduate School is collaborating with the academic deans to move the Graduate School Exit Questionnaire to an electronic platform. This matter was discussed in the Deans Council on Monday, April 21, 2008.

Dr. Person also announced that the work of Dr. Janice Chambers, a faculty member in Environmental Toxicology, has been included in a new book published by Council of Graduate Schools, entitled Graduate Education and the Public Good. Dr. Chambers was selected as one of 34 faculty members chosen nationally to be included in this publication.

6. Report from Graduate Student Association (GSA)
Mr. Mark Thomas, GSA president, was not present. In his absence, the following report was circulated:

The GSA had our 6th Annual Research Symposium on April 4, 2008 at the Colvard Student Union.
We had 19 students from life sciences, 22 students from physical sciences, and 4 students from social sciences do oral presentations, which is a total of 45 oral presentations.

We had 12 students from life sciences, 6 students from physical sciences, and 6 students from social sciences present posters, which is a total of 24 poster presentations.

Sum total, 69 students presented their research at this year’s symposium, which is approximately 20 fewer students than last year. Given past trends in which the numbers of participants appears to have cycled from low, high, and back to low, we anticipate there to be an increase in student participation for next year’s symposium. However, such a prediction is purely speculative, because it is based on anecdotal analysis of 6 observations.

The oral competition winners for Life Sciences were:
First:   Nelida Rodriguez-Osario
Second:  Kristine Evans
Third:   Seiji Miyazona

The oral competition winners for Physical Sciences were:
First:   Mohammad Rouhi
Second:  Sheena Reeves
Third:   Kaela Leonard

The oral competition winners for Social Sciences were:
First:   Jacob Walker
Second:  Joseph Holland
Third:   Luke Fowler

The poster competition winners for Life Sciences were:
First:   Ronald Pringle
Second:  LaShonda Robertson
Third:   Lin Wei

The poster competition winners for Physical Sciences were:
First:   Surya Saha
Second:  Aytug Gencoglu
Third:   Quratulann Ijaz

The poster competition winners for Social Sciences were:
First:   John Edwards
Second:  Barbara Kaderaback
Third:   Breckin Cardinal
We are grateful to the judges who donated their time and expertise to the Research Symposium. The judges were:

Dr. Erdenechimeg Eldev-Ochir, Research Associate, Social Science Research Center  
Mr. Daniel Carruth Research Associate, Center for Advanced Vehicular Systems  
Dr. RH. Gilmer Jr., Associate Professor, Finance & Economics  
Dr. Claudia Hohn, Manager Specific Pathogen Free Fish Hatchery  
Dr. Lynn Holt, Professor and Head, Philosophy & Religion  
Dr. TJ Jankun-Kelly, Assistant Professor, Computer Science and Engineering  
Dr. Gary McFadyen Assistant Research Professor, Center for Advanced Vehicular Systems  
Dr. David Morse, Professor, Counselor Education & Ed Psychology  
Dr. Linda B. Morse, Professor, Counselor Education & Ed Psychology  
Dr. Anurag Srivastava, Assistant Research Professor, Electrical and Computer Engineering  
Dr. Carrick Williams, Assistant Professor, Psychology

The logistics of student presentations went flawlessly and we credit that success to deliberate planning and preparation. Since its renovation, the Colvard Student Union is ideally suited for events like our symposium. Unfortunately, a series of unexpected occurrences prevented our guest lecturer from speaking. We wish to thank Dr. Peter Ryan for his patience while we attempted to resolve our problems. Additionally, we apologize for his not being able to deliver his speech. The unforeseen events that initiated our problems were being told the day of the symposium that we could not use outside catering, blown light bulbs in three projectors, and severe weather. While these may seem like minor inconveniences, their result was compounded and they will be revisited in more detail later in the current report.

The Graduate Student Association held its 2008 Annual Awards Banquet on April 22nd to honor 6th Annual Research Symposium winners and the Graduate Assistant of the Year winners. The 2008-2009 Graduate Student Association officers were also sworn in at the banquet.

The Donald Zacharias Master’s Level Teaching Assistant of the Year Nominees were:  
Crystal Boudreaux  
Daniel Sykes  
Ziwei Wang

The Donald Zacharias Master’s Level Teaching Assistant of the Year was awarded to Crystal Boudreaux.

The Donald Zacharias Doctoral Level Teaching Assistant of the Year Nominees were:  
Suman Balasubramanian  
Justin Crapps  
Karen Voncille Davidson  
Anserd J. Foster  
Curtis Matherne
The Donald Zacharias Doctoral Level Teaching Assistant of the Year was awarded to Matthew Roberts.

The Master’s Level Research Assistant of the Year Nominees were:
- Kimberly Davis
- Shen Ma
- Sunil Palla
- Amritanshu Thakur

The Master’s Level Research Assistant of the Year was jointly awarded to Sunil Palla and Amritanshu Thakur.

The Doctoral Level Research Assistant of the Year Nominees were:
- Shangshu Cai
- Claudia Hohn
- Chengqi Guo
- David C. Holly
- Tutku Karocolak
- Charles J. Matyi
- Adam Orr
- Shardendu Singh
- Gursimran Walia
- Marlena Yost

The Doctoral Level Research Assistant of the Year Award was jointly awarded to David C. Holly and Adam Orr.

The Service Assistant of the Year Nominees were:
- Harry Lam
- Ginni Marwah
- Shanshan Pan
- Lawanda Swan

The Service Assistant of the Year was awarded to Harry Lam.

We also thank the Graduate Assistant of the Year Selection Committees for their diligent work.

The Donald Zacharias Teaching Assistant of the Year Selection Committee members were:
- Dr. Carol M. Lehman, Chair
- Dr. Connie M. Forde
- Dr. B Keith Hodge
- Dr. Linda B. Morse
- Dr. Al Rankins

The Research Assistant of the Year Selection Committee members were:
Dr. Barbara Spencer, Chair  
Dr. David Monts  
Dr. David Peebles  
Dr. Peter Ryan  
Dr. Dwayne A. Wise

The Service Assistant of the Year Selection Committee members were:  
Dr. Laura Crittenden, Chair  
Ms. Amy Adkerson  
Ms. Rita Burrell  
Ms. Pamela Sullivan  
Ms. Laura Walling

We also wish to thank the 2008 Annual Awards Banquet Keynote Speaker, Dr. Lori Bruce for her thoughts and comments about the “Three Legged Stool” of academia.

The Graduate Student Association awarded Mrs. Frances Person with its first Special Service Award. The Special Service Award was initiated this year. The award it not intended as an annual award, but rather it is awarded on a case-basis. It is awarded by the Graduate Student Association Officers to recognize individuals who contribute to graduate education at Mississippi State University, but do so with less direct methods than standard academic mechanisms.

Three of the officers-elect were sworn in before the close of the banquet. The incoming Treasurer was not present due to class obligations and he will be sworn in at a later date. The incoming officers are:

Mr. Terrance West  
Ms. Beth Rauhaus  
Ms. Brittany Clay  
Mr. James Orr

Mr. Terrance West  
President Elect (current Vice President)  
Ms. Beth Rauhaus  
Vice President Elect (current Treasurer)  
Ms. Brittany Clay  
Secretary Elect  
Mr. James Orr  
Treasurer Elect

We had our final regular meeting of the year on April 24, 2008. Other business that was addressed by the Graduate Student Association since the last meeting includes opening a dialog with Mike Rackley about computer commons access difficulties that graduate students are having, especially in the library. Given this year’s increase in the MSU student population, and the requirement that freshman live on campus in the Fall, we are concerned this issue may be indicative of what could be a much larger problem in the future.

Mr. Cadenhead contacted me again on the 14th of April concerning student insurance. (This includes insurance for all students – graduate and undergraduate). The decision was made to renew with United Healthcare (Student Resources) for the upcoming year. However, the pharmacy allowance is being increased from $250.00 to $750.00 with a higher annual cap from $75,000 to $100,000. Additionally, oral contraception is also being added.
Returning to the problems encountered during our research symposium. We feel that an elaboration of what occurred is in order. Despite the fact that we (specifically myself and Ms. Julie Goodin) spoke with union representatives on three separate occasions during the process of reserving rooms for the symposium, we were not informed until our arrival on the morning of the symposium that we could not use outside catering inside the Colvard Student Union. We had arranged outside catering through a local business and we were informed by the Assistant Vice President for Student Affairs that we had to cancel our catering and go with the contracted agency. In fact, Mr. Broyles apparently took it upon himself to place an order with the contractor, because while we were trying to decide how best to handle the situation, Ms. Goodin called the contractor to find out about cost and she was informed they were already working on a food order.

Since we were already obligated to a local business and in the interest of fairness we decided that ethically, in good practice, and from a professional perspective, we should not cancel our catering order. We chose to move the luncheon and Dr. Ryan’s speech to the Bost Extension Center and we posted notices on the doors of the rooms we were using and announced the venue change to each group of students at the symposium. As our scheduled luncheon time came and went, it was determined that the projectors in Bost were not in service. We then brought a portable projector to Bost that we had used earlier in one of the presentation rooms. However, that projector failed as well. At that point we were well into the afternoon and we decided that we should cancel Dr. Ryan’s speech. While the previous events transpired a deluge occurred and the majority of symposium participants did not come to Bost. After speaking with several students, I believe the students knew about the venue change, but did not come to Bost because they chose not to brave the weather. Most were parked far from the Union and it was a matter of arranging transportation in a severe storm.

Clearly, our dilemma was due to factors beyond our control. However, it brought a question to mind. Does not the Colvard Student Union belong to and exist for students? If so, we feel that it may not be in the best interest of the student population for catering to be contracted inside the facility. Without additional information, we do not understand how such a policy could be beneficial for, or in the best interest of students. Such a policy does not allow student organizations to seek the lowest bidder for catering and it limits student choices.

Our second concern is about the overall treatment of graduate students at the Union. Individually, all students were respected and the Union employees were helpful. However, as a group, we were not treated very well. First, not being told until the day of the symposium that we could not use outside catering is outright unacceptable. While we understand the obligatory nature of contractual obligations, this was their mistake and not ours. Mr. Broyles should have been able to make some concessions. Second, we were told to remove our signs that indicated the luncheon and speaker venue had changed. Certainly, that latitude could have been allowed since it was their mistake. The signs were printed on color paper and did not look unprofessional in any manner, but they were against Union policy. Third, we understand that if Mr. Broyles placed a food order with the contractor, he was probably trying to help, but he is in no position to make decisions for the Graduate Student Association. Although the notion of canceling a catering order at the last minute is apparently an accepted good business practice with Mr. Broyles, it is not accepted by the
Graduate Student Association. We think it is bad business and the Graduate Student Association refuses to do anything that portrays graduate students at Mississippi State University unprofessionally or in a bad light in the community. Canceling a large catering order three hours before it was scheduled to arrive would have done just that. We also are going on the record to make it clear that we did not place an order with the contractor and we are in no way financially obligated to them for any presumption of catering our luncheon of April 4th 2008 should the issue arise.

Although this report is not intended as the GSA President’s personal forum, I wish to take the opportunity to personally thank the members of the Graduate Council for their work on graduate education. As a student, I appreciate the collegial atmosphere that was afforded me by the other Graduate Council members. I am currently on a committee and I will of course meet my obligations for that committee. However, if I can be of any assistance in the future, please do not hesitate to ask.

Note: The GSA Luncheon was moved from the Colvard Student Union to the Palmeiro Center, not Bost Extension.

7. Old Business

a) Form and procedures for changing concentrations and majors (Dr. Person)

Dr. Spencer asked Dr. Person to elaborate on the progress of the subcommittee he is chairing. The subcommittee was tasked to develop a form to make changing of concentrations and majors easier.

Dr. Person stated that there had been some discussion regarding that issue but no conclusion had been reached, the committee will continue to work on this issue. Therefore, we are not prepared to make any recommendations to the Graduate Council at this point.

Dr. Spencer asked Dr. Person to report on this issue during the next Graduate Council meeting.

b) Graduate Faculty/Student Ethics

Dr. Wise reported that the subcommittee consisting of Dr. Person, Dr. Ryan, Dr. Shivaji, Ms. Shlynn Morris, Ms. Karin Lee, Mr. Thomas and himself has not yet met. Therefore, he is unable to report back to Graduate Council regarding this issue at this point. It was decided that a Rights and Responsibilities document for graduate faculty and graduate students alike will be drafted and submitted to the Graduate Council at a later date.

c) OGS Website (Drs. Barrow and Younan - Handout)
Dr. Barrow circulated a report regarding the OGS website. Dr. Barrow stated that the recommendations received from all survey participants were very useful. Comments from the OGS staff were mostly content-oriented and could easily be incorporated.

d) Transfer of credit form and procedures (Ms. Burrell and Dr. Spencer - Handouts)

Dr. Spencer stated that the Graduate Council passed several changes to the transfer policy for graduate students related to international transfers and transfer of military credit last year (see Graduate Council Minutes of January 18, 2008). However, the new information is not yet reflected in the Graduate Bulletin and the information available now is scattered and repeated throughout the Graduate Bulletin.

Dr. Spencer stated that with assistance from Ms. Rita Burrell, she revised the current Graduate Bulletin information to state graduate transfer policy more clearly, given the policies that were passed. One handout divides graduate transfer policy into three distinct sections, domestic, international and military transfers, with guidance stated for each kind of transfer separately. This information is designed for the general section in the Graduate Bulletin.

The second handout is a statement of transfer policy for each degree with the goal to eliminate repeated verbiage and designed to very clearly state the policy.

Dr. Spencer also submitted a draft of a revised transfer approval form that incorporates the changes made as stated above. The revised form clearly denotes transfer credits from domestic universities, transfer credits from international universities and military transfer credit. Dr. Younan pointed out that signature lines for the minor professor and minor graduate coordinator should be included on the form.

Dr. Spencer also circulated a handout of a sample transcript that demonstrates how transfer credit looks on a student’s transcript.

Ms. Burrell lead the discussion on this subject and elaborated on some additional changes that will be required to make the policy statements consistent, such as including thesis research hours in the statement that addresses the transfer of dissertation research hours.

Mr. Butch Stokes added that the Registrar’s Office is working toward eliminating the “xxx” designation for military transfers at the undergraduate level. With the cooperation of departments, the credit is entered into Banner representing an actual class title which greatly aids in the degree audit later. Since the Registrar’s Office is now working toward a degree audit system at the graduate level, entering actual course names and numbers would be beneficial later on.

Ms. Burrell asked about transferring a course that will not fit within our current curriculum. How would such a course be entered? Mr. Stokes suggested using the designation for a Directed Individual Study in such a case.
Discussion followed. It was decided that Special Topic would be more appropriate to use at the Graduate Level since Master’s and Educational Specialist programs are limited to 6 hours of directed Individual Study. Dr. Spencer added that she has a form already prepared that would address this issue. She will email the form to Graduate Council members for review.

Dr. Spencer reminded the Graduate Council that a motion is needed for a policy change to allow the transfer of military credit with a grade of S.

Dr. Wise made a motion to change the policy to transfer military credit with a grade of S. The motion was seconded by Dr. Younan.

Graduate Council voted and the motion carried by acclamation.

8. New Business

a) Combined undergraduate/graduate programs (4+1) (Handouts)

Dr. Spencer explained that a meeting was held to for preliminary discussion of combined undergraduate/graduate programs, also called 4+1 programs. The meeting and discussion was spurred by an increased demand for such programs which seems to be a national trend, and Mississippi State University would miss out if we did not develop such a policy for our campus.

Dr. Jerry Gilbert, with input from Drs. Chamblee, Person, Spencer and Rankins, developed the following discussion points:

- Students may apply as early as the end of their sophomore year in college (60 hours or more or graded courses) for admission into the combined program. The application to the combined program may include an application to graduate school, depending on the specifics of the individual program. Regardless of when the combined program application occurs, the student should apply to graduate school by the end of their first semester of their senior year.

- Departments will have an admission process in place that identifies students in the combined program.

- Students must have an overall GPA of 3.5 on their undergraduate coursework to apply to the combined program.

- Individual departments may have additional requirements for the admission to the graduate program such as taking the GRE or GMAT.

- Students may double count up to nine hours for both the bachelor’s and master’s degrees. The double counting will work as follows: once the student is accepted into the combined program, the student and the advisor may select up to nine hours that will
satisfy both undergraduate and graduate requirements. These courses may be split level or 8000 level classes. The student should take the course for graduate credit and fulfill all graduate-level requirements of the course. After successfully completing the graduate-level class, the student and advisor will fill out a request to receive undergraduate credit for the course. After receiving the request, the Registrar will grant credit for the undergraduate course and give the same grade. For the case of a split-level class, the transcript will show both on the transcript. In the case of an 8000 level class, a special topics undergraduate course of the same title will be entered on the transcript or a “dummy” class created with the same name to allow dual credit.

- Before fulfilling the requirements for the bachelor’s degree, a student can take no more than nine credit hours at the graduate level.

- Students are classified as undergraduates until fulfilling all the requirements for the undergraduate degree, at which point they are classified as a graduate student.

- Students will complete all of the requirements for both the bachelor’s and master’s degrees.

- Students may opt out of the combined program at any time and complete only the undergraduate portion of the program. No additional dual counting of courses will occur after opting out.

- The student will receive the bachelor’s degree after the requirements for the bachelor’s degree have been met. Typically students will receive their bachelor’s after the fourth year and the master’s degree after their fifth year of study.

- This program will allow both thesis and non-thesis programs to be included.

- A proposal to offer a combined program will need approval by the UCCC and the Graduate Council.

Discussion followed. The question was raised whether various accreditation bodies have a limit as to how many hours can be double-counted. Dr. Spencer stated that she will check into that.

Ms. Burrell raised the question whether students in the combined program could still take additional graduate courses as a senior under the current policy? Dr. Spencer stated that the current policy for seniors to take graduate courses will stay in effect since those courses are not double-counted and only appear on the student’s graduate transcript.

Dr. Allen asked how exceeding the 9 hours of shared credit will be handled. He gave an example of classes in his department that also included a one hour lab, making it a 4-hour credit course. It was decided that an exception through the appropriate dean will suffice to document such cases.
Dr. Rabideau raised the issue of 124 hrs requirement by IHL to confer a baccalaureate degree. Can a student be in graduate status with less than 124 hrs?

Mr. Butch Stokes, University Registrar, suggested that students in this program stay in undergraduate status until the degree is awarded for tuition and fee assessment purposes. Graduate Council members pointed out that this issue was addressed in the discussion points.

Dr. Younan suggested that Mississippi State University submit one general proposal for the 4+1 program to UCCC.

Dr. Spencer formed a subcommittee of Drs. Gilbert, Person, Chamblee, Younan and Mr. Stokes to discuss the minimal requirements for a proposal to UCCC. The subcommittee will report back to Graduate Council.

b) Nominations for Chair and Vice Chair

Dr. Wise made a motion that the nominations for Chair and Vice-Chair of the Graduate Council be submitted via email. This process will be facilitated through the Interim Dean of the Graduate School.

Meeting adjourned at 2:30 p.m.

The date for the next Graduate Council meeting has been set for 1:30 p.m. on September 26, 2008, at 611 Allen Hall.