Graduate Council  
Mississippi State University  

Number: 1  
Date: August 28, 2009  


1. Dr. Dwayne Wise asked for introductions around the table.  

Dr. Wise asked that the typo on page 4 be corrected. Then he asked for any other revisions to the minutes (April 24, 2009).  

Motion was made by Dr. Kathy Dooley and seconded by Dr. Burnette Hamil to accept the minutes with the noted amendment above.  

Minutes were approved by acclamation.  

2. University Committee on Courses and Curricula (UCCC)  

Dr. Tim Chamblee stated that he did not receive a response from the department in regard to the Graduate Certificate in Information Systems. Therefore, this item on the agenda under Old Business should be deferred to the next meeting.  

4. Report from the Office of the Graduate School (OGS)  

Dr. Louis D’Abramo presented the following information:  

- A total of 123 doctorates were awarded for the 2008-2009 year, the second largest number in the history of the Graduate School. 352 students received graduate degrees at the end of the summer 2009 term. There were 37 doctorates awarded.  

- For the 2009 academic year, a total of 4,649 applications to graduate school were processed. For fall 2009 we had 3002 applications, a 13.5% increase over last year’s applications for the fall.  

- The unofficial graduate student population count for fall 2009 is 3688. This is the highest number of graduate students in the history of MSU. It represents an increase of 4.3% over last year.
For the fall of 2009 semester, there are a total of 1052 graduate assistantships. The university payment for health care coverage is now $200 per semester, $400 per academic year, representing 40% of the total premium.

Ms. Monica Robinson joined the staff of the Office of the Graduate School as an Admissions Assistant. Ms. Robinson’s primary responsibility will be the processing of applications for Academic Outreach and Continuing Education. She will be the OGS contact for the AOCE staff.

Mary Ann Jones of the Mitchell memorial Library and Pam Sullivan of the Office of the Graduate School have put together a special event for new international graduate students. It is called, “Find Your Feet” and is designed to introduce students to campus resources and Starkville community information. The Library is developing a website for international graduate students and it will be available through the Office of the Graduate School website.

The Workflow and Xtender graduate application processes have been implemented for the College of Forest Resources and for the remaining departments in the College of Engineering. Training sessions for the College of Arts and Sciences are currently on hold based upon concern about OGS has sufficient staff to meet the demands of this load and accordingly provide effective service to the graduate faculty.

The Graduate Ambassadors Program that is designed to help in the recruitment of new graduate students, both domestic and international. Currently, we have 30 ambassadors, representing 23 departments in 6 colleges. These ambassador students are receiving inquiries.

Two new programs have been inaugurated by the Office of the Graduate School: Travel Assistance Grants for Graduate Students (TAGGS) to assist in funding graduate students, preferably Ph.D.s who will give papers/posters at national and international meetings. The other program assists in the funding for travel costs associated with the bringing of outstanding prospective graduate students to visit the MSU campus and meet with department heads/graduate coordinators.

The International Teaching Assistant Workshop and the General Teaching Assistant Workshop were help prior to the beginning of the fall semester. The content and objectives of both workshops have been modified to better meet the objectives. OGS is now collaborating with the Office of International Education and professors/instructors in the Department of Communication to provide an international workshop that includes evaluation of pronunciation and comprehension in addition to an introduction to teaching culture and expectations. OGS also collaborated with the Holmes Cultural Diversity Center in offering the Cultural Connections Networking Reception during the International TA Workshop.

A total of 181 students participated among the workshop components.
International TA Workshop:
64 Participants, 78% Passed English Certification Evaluation

General TA Workshop:
174 Participants, 100% Passed

Evaluation for Classroom Certification:
137 Participants, 82% Passed (113 out of 137)

New TAs Certified (By Group) in the Fall 2009 TA Workshops:
TA1: 64
TA2/TA3: 115
Total: 179 (181 Participants across all workshop components)

Faculty/Staff Volunteers: 39 Total
Evaluators for English Certification and/or Classroom Certification: 23
International TA Workshop Presentation: 6 (+ Superintendent from Starkville Public School District)
General TA Workshop Presentation: 10

- Five new graduate students underrepresented in STEM disciplines (mechanical engineering, geosciences, chemistry, and mathematics) participated in the Alliance for Graduate Education in Mississippi (AGEM) Summer Graduate Bridge Program, July 6 through August 7, 2009. This program is designed to facilitate student transition from undergraduate to graduate school. The students participated in various workshops related to mentoring, networking, oral communication/presentation, grammar writing and proofreading/editing, business skills, attire and etiquette, research proposal development, health in graduate education, diversity as it relates to the workplace, and strategies for success in graduate school.

- Two workshops to inform and educate students about external scholarship/fellowship opportunities have been organized by Associate Dean Bill Person. A Graduate Student Fulbright Information Workshop was held on Wednesday, August 26, 2009. Approximately 26 graduate students attended and Mr. Tony Claudino, Director of Fulbright Student Program Outreach, and Ms. Katrina Durbak, Outreach Assistant, from the Institute of International Education presented the students with valuable information about the application process for this program.

The Office of the Graduate School, in collaboration with the Bagley College of Engineering, will host an information workshop pertaining to the National Science Foundation (NSF) Graduate Fellowship program on Wednesday, September 2, 2009 from 3:00 PM to 5:00 PM in the John Grisham Library. Several MSU faculty members have agreed to serve as reviewers for the NSF applications. The purpose of this initiative is to increase the number of successful applications of our graduate students at MSU.

- The Graduate Student Research Symposium has been changed from the spring semester to the fall semester. The Symposium will be held on November 6, 2009. Details will be sent to graduate coordinators and will be available on the OGS website soon.
• The Office of the Graduate School will participate in the Career Day Program at Mississippi Valley State University, Thursday, September 17, 2009. The Office of the Graduate School will participate in the Graduate and Professional Day Conference at Tougaloo College, Friday, September 18, 2009.

• The Alliance for Graduate Education in Mississippi (AGEM) was one of six Alliance for Graduate Education and the Professoriate (AGEP) programs selected nationally to participate in a program assessment commissioned by NSF. The assessment team will visit Mississippi on September 14-16, 2009.

• I am working with Bruce Crain in an attempt to develop a loan program for international graduate students. International graduate students arrive at MSU, there is a 10 day residence time before they are able to apply for a social security card and then another approximately 14 days before they receive the official card. Many of these students have assistantships that start immediately, but there is a delay in getting on the payroll because of a lack of the SS#. Such a situation translates into not being paid for one, sometimes two, pay periods and often causes financial hardship for these international students. Applications for interest free loans would be from August 15 through September 7. The loan would have a $500 cap and students would be obliged to repay the loan within 2 months. If they failed to repay, then their registration for classes during the following semester would be placed on hold.

• Associate Dean Bill Person has been working with the Office of External Affairs to develop a letter soliciting donations to the Graduate School that will be sent out to past graduate students. The letter is scheduled to be sent out on September 1.

5. Report from Graduate Student Association (GSA)

GSA President Beth Rauhaus presented the following report:

The first GSA meeting was held on Monday, August 24, 2009. Over 40 students attended. Major discussion points were the student insurance, revised applications for travel grants, and the upcoming research symposium (November 6, 2009 at 8:30 am, in the Colvard Student Union).

6. Old Business

a) Graduate Faculty Appointment Policy (D’Abramo) (Handout)

Dr. D’Abramo explained that this issue has been much more difficult that he had anticipated 9 months ago when he first asked to have it included on the agenda. He briefly restated some of the problems discussed during previous Graduate Council meetings:
There are many questions regarding who can be a member of the graduate faculty, at what level they should be appointed and what the criteria is for appointment at any given level.

Presently, our policy is vague at best and not enforced. We had instructors serving as committee chairs for graduate students.

A subcommittee consisting of Drs. Hart Bailey, Tim Chamblee, Meghan Millea, Burnette Hamil and Juan Silva was formed to examine this issue and draft language for a policy statement to be published in a future Graduate Bulletin. The policy should be clear and address all kinds of situations in regard to serving on a graduate committee.

It was determined that faculty appointment criteria should be decoupled from the Promotion and Tenure document.

Dr. D’Abramo stated that Graduate Council approved the proposed Graduate Faculty level descriptions but not a new policy for inclusion in the Graduate Bulletin. A policy document is still needed in order to move the implementation forward through the proper channels and satisfy SACS requirements in a timely manner. He also stated that he would seek the approval of the Faculty Senate as a matter of courtesy and that he would take the document before the Dean’s Council to garner support.

Dr. D’Abramo stressed that if he were to enforce the policy that is in place now, a number of colleges would be in serious violation. Therefore, it would be better to draft a new graduate faculty appointment policy that would take into consideration many of the ideas and suggestions that have surfaced from discussing this issue with a wide variety of faculty members.

This issue is so controversial because there are two clashing view points: Appointment to Level 1 faculty as soon as a new professor is hired versus appointment at Level 2 for a mentoring period (serve as co-major professor) and these differing views prove to be a sticking point. Some departments want to grant Level 1 from day one, while other departments require their new faculty members to begin at Level 2 and aspire to Level 1.

Dr. Nicole Ponder stated that her subcommittee consisting of Drs. Reynolds and Shivaji read and reviewed the AOP on Academic Add/Drop Policy for any problems with wording. The subcommittee reported that they found no issues or problems.

b) AOP 12.01 Subcommittee Report (Ponder)

Dr. George Adebiyi requested that Graduate Council examine the policy of when the time clock starts ticking for a graduate student. Currently, the time to complete a degree program starts with the earliest class on the Program of Study. This policy may hinder recruitment efforts for graduate students who are working and completing a degree. Several options are available and this issue will be an agenda item in the near future.
Dr. Doug Goodman had a question about grade inflation for graduate students. It was determined that this issue is being dealt with in Faculty Senate.

Meeting adjourned at 2:45 p.m.

The date for the next Graduate Council meeting has been set for September 25, 2009, at 1:30 p.m. in 611 Allen Hall.