Graduate Council
Mississippi State University

Number: 2
Date: September 24, 2010


1. Dr. Juan Silva welcomed all Graduate Council members and guests.

2. Dr. Silva asked for a motion to accept the minutes (August 27, 2010).

   Motion to accept the minutes was made by Dr. Burnette Hamil and seconded by Dr. David Lewis.

   Dr. Dwayne Wise pointed out two minor grammatical errors on pages 3 and 6, respectively.

   Minutes were approved with noted corrections.

3. University Committee on Courses and Curricula (UCCC)

   Dr. Angie Bourgeois stated that the UCCC did not have any graduate proposals at the last meeting and therefore has no report. She alerted Graduate Council members to a slight procedural change during UCCC meetings. While guests will still be able to present their proposal and be able to answer questions, they are asked to leave the meeting after that. Additional discussion and the vote on the proposal will happen without the presence of guests.

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

   Dr. D’Abramo presented the following report:

   - **Entry of Graduate Faculty Data into Banner**
     The process of entering graduate faculty and graduate teaching participants and graduate committee participants into Banner is almost completed. Changes of status will be made through Banner. Ultimately the goal is to have an automated notification of expiration of terms and confirmation of changes of status.
• **Applications to Graduate School**  
For the fall 2010, the beginning of the new academic year, there was an 8.3% increase in application and a 3.8% increase in admissions. For each of the past two years, there has been a record enrollment of new students. Of those students who applied, 48.4% were admitted. The admit-to-enroll ratio, that is, the number of students enrolled divided by the number of students admitted, is 64%. 31.2% of all students who applied were admitted. Overall graduate school enrollment has increased by 14.3% over the last five years.

• **Bulletin of the Graduate School**  
The 2010/2011 *Bulletin of the Graduate School* is now available in print form. Copies are available upon request.

• **Graduate Assistantships**  
There are a total of 1,154 assistantships for the fall, 2010 semester: 632 (54.7%) research, 367 (31.8%) teaching, and 155 (13.4%) service.

• **Travel Assistance Grants for Graduate Students (TAGGS)**  
Applications for TAGGS, Travel Assistance Grants for Graduate Students, are still being accepted. Funding up to $1,500 per graduate student, preferably Ph.D.s, is provided to selected award recipients who will give a paper/poster presentation at national or international meetings. Requests will be accepted and reviewed until all available funds, ~$15,000, have been dispersed for this TAGGS funding cycle.

• **Graduate Recruitment Assistance Grants (GRAGs)**  
The deadline for reporting the results of efforts associated with the 2009-10 GRAG awards is September 30, 2010. If a report is not received, then additional requests for recruitment funds from the 2010-2011 program will not be considered. The call for proposals for the 2010-2011 GRAG awards was sent today. The deadline for submission is October 29. A total of $15,000 of funds is available ($1,500 to $2,000 per grant) and strategies that involve departmental cost sharing are preferred. Contact Karin Lee for details.

• **Fees for electronic publication of theses/dissertations**  
This cost has been eliminated. However, for a special service such as copyrighting, a charge will still be assessed.

• **Preparing Future Faculty**  
In collaboration with the Center for Teaching and Learning and the Mitchell Memorial Library, the Preparing Future Faculty Program was inaugurated in August. The program is coordinated by Meghan Millea with assistance from Linda Morse, Deborah Lee and me. The fourteen students enrolled in the program represent five colleges.

• **Verizon Wireless Fellowship**  
Ms. Lauren Michel Vasquez, a doctoral student in the Department of Sociology, is the first recipient of the Verizon Wireless Graduate Fellowship for the academic year 2010-2011. The 12-month fellowship is in the amount of $18,000. The student selected must be involved in research associated with domestic/family violence and is required to organize some community event with the objective of increasing the awareness of this issue.
• **Alliance for Graduate Education in Mississippi**
  On September 8, 2010 the Alliance for Graduate Education hosted an undergraduate workshop, “Making the Decision to Attend Graduate School” that was conducted by Dr. Howard G. Adams of H. G. Adams and Associates. A total of 51 students attended. A graduate workshop, “Strategies for Success in Graduate Education”, followed and was attended by eight graduate students. After the two workshops were completed, an AGEM Welcome Reception was held to welcome our newly enrolled AGEM scholars. Several students and faculty members attended.

• **Minority Recruitment**
  Associate Dean Person visited 23 students who attended the Graduate and Professional Day Conference at Tougaloo College on Friday, September 17th. Ms. Shlynn Morris, AGEM Program Coordinator, and Ms. Vemitra White, AGEM Graduate Research Assistant, visited 15 students at the Career Day Program at Mississippi Valley State University on Tuesday, September 14th. Associate Dean Person will be visiting Tuskegee University on October 21, 2010 to attend their annual Graduate and Professional School Fair.

5. **Report from Graduate Student Association (GSA)**

   GSA President Luke Fowler presented the following report:

   GSA held its first meeting with a pretty good turnout on August 31 with Provost Dr. Gilbert as guest speaker. The next meeting is scheduled for September 29 and representatives from the Mitchell Memorial Library have been invited to tell us about the new SCOPUS database and the new library website. GSA is hoping to introduce their Facebook and Twitter pages during that meeting and we also hope to present our updated website.

   GSA is planning for the next Graduate Research Symposium which will be very different this year. It will be moved to January 2011. GSA is planning to invite graduate students from other Mississippi universities to participate in the symposium in an effort to increase the number of participants. Presently, GSA is trying to schedule the Graduate Research Symposium on a Saturday.

6. **Old Business**

   a) **Graduate Student Grievance Process (Subcommittee Report Dr. Dooley)**

   Grievance Subcommittee Chair Dr. Kathy Dooley could not be present and will present her report of the Graduate Student Grievance Policy during the next meeting.

   b) **Automatic Dismissal of Graduate Students (Subcommittee Report Dr. Wise)**

   Dr. Wise stated that the subcommittee consisting of Drs. Allen, Monts and Ryan as well as Ms. Karin Lee has met once. He stressed that an automatic dismissal based on some set of criteria is very problematic since every department has a different policy and the degree programs are so varied.
Dr. Wise suggested that implementation of CAPPS (Curriculum, Advising, and Program Planning) for graduate students might help eliminate some of the problems with monitoring of academic progress of graduate students. He also deferred a subcommittee report on automatic dismissal to the next meeting.

Dr. D’Abramo noted that OGS had an informational meeting about CAPPS at the Registrar’s Office. He asked Associate Registrar, Ms. Sharon Nobles, to say a few words about the subject.

Ms. Nobles explained what CAPPS is and that it is already implemented for undergraduates. She noted that CAPPS has been built for all graduate programs and is ready to be implemented after feedback from several entities such as Deans, Graduate Coordinators and graduate students. CAPPS will enable departments to track their graduate students from the beginning of their program all the way through to graduation. It allows people designated by each department to put the program of study for each graduate student into CAPPS. Only designated people in each department will have the ability to input or change a student’s graduate program of study; visibility of the program of study can also be limited to the student and other designated people.

Ms. Nobles emphasized that CAPPS information reflecting “real-time” data is a huge advantage for departments – if a student drops a class, CAPPS will show that and if a grade has been changed, CAPPS will also show that immediately. She stated that most undergraduates enthusiastically implemented CAPPS and that no different reaction is expected from graduate students.

Dr. D’Abramo suggested that the Registrar’s Office make a CAPPS presentation to the Graduate Student Association

c) Revision of Wording/Signatures on Graduate Student Diplomas (Handout)

Dr. D’Abramo revisited the issue of adding the Graduate Dean’s signature to graduate diplomas and to change the wording to “awarded by the Graduate School” because the academic deans opposed this change during a recent Dean’s Council meeting.

Dr. Ryan clarified that some academic deans had issues specifically with master’s programs as they felt that those are owned by the academic college and should reflect that.

Dr. Lewis asked who defines the standards for acceptable completion of graduate degrees. By and large, the Graduate Council is tasked to define the standards at Mississippi State University.

Dr. Silva suggested that a subcommittee be formed that will come up with a strong recommendation to facilitate the changes to graduate diplomas to differentiate them from undergraduate diplomas. Dr. Meghan Millea agreed to serve as chair, along with Drs. Lewis and Silva.
d) Change in TOEFL/IELTS Policy (Handout)

Dr. D’Abramo explained the current graduate policy states that “Any higher test score subsequently submitted will not waive any of the ESL requirements imposed as a result of the official (original) test score under which the student is admitted” (pp. 43-44, 2010-2011) which disappointed several graduate students and their departments.

Dr. D’Abramo requested that Graduate Council vote on this issue so he can present it to the Provost. He proposed a modification to the current policy which would allow a little more flexibility for the students. The proposed modification reads “Once a student is admitted, one additional TOEFL or IELTS score will be accepted. The higher score of either two TOEFL or two IELTS test scores (not one of each), will be used to determine whether regular admission is granted or ESL course requirements will change.”

Dr. Lewis made a motion to modify the TOEFL/IELTS policy as stated above. Dr. Wise seconded the motion.

Discussion followed. Dr. Person pointed out that retaking of the TOEFL/IELTS should occur prior to enrollment. Dr. Lewis suggested that the phrase “but prior to enrollment” be added to the first sentence after “Once a student is admitted, …”

Dr. Lewis made a motion to amend the previous motion to modify the TOEFL/IELTS policy to include “but prior to enrollment.” Dr. Wise seconded the motion. Graduate Council members voted and the motion passed by acclamation. Two Graduate Council members abstained.

7. New Business

a) Dual Degrees

Dr. D’Abramo stated that he is not prepared to discuss this topic but would like to revisit this issue, possibly during the next meeting.

b) Conditional Language Admission (Handouts)

Ms. Lee explained that Conditional Language Admission would allow the applicant conditional admission into a graduate program one year into the future, provided that the applicant meets all other admission requirements. Such an admission would mean that the student would come to MSU for one year of ESL first, followed by admission into the degree program if the student meets the condition of passing the required language test.

If the student is able to pass the ESL after one year, he or she would be admitted into the degree program. Many agencies that sponsor international graduate students also pay for ESL study for applicants who have either no TOEFL score or too low a score to gain admission into a graduate program.
Conditional Language Admission students would not be allowed to take any classes other than ESL and they would remain on a hold to prevent registration. If the student does not succeed in passing ESL, he/she would not be admitted to the degree program. The admission would be contingent upon passing that language requirement.

There are many international students with a government scholarships (Saudi Arabia) or being placed by agencies such as LASPAU (they place sponsored Latin-American students) or IIE who have not had a chance to take the TOEFL yet or score too low to meet our admission requirements. These students are going elsewhere because many other institutions already have such a Conditional Language Admission in place.

There are several benefits for MSU if Conditional Language Admission is implemented.

- For the Department - If the student passes ESL, the department will have a fully funded graduate student; better control of the quality of international students who are admitted into graduate school (MSU International Education staff teach the courses).
- For the ESL Center – Receives revenue from the student's sponsor for ESL study.
- For MSU – Graduate enrollment numbers would increase.

There is even a benefit for the student in that the student receives one year of ESL training, even if admission can not be granted because requirements are not met.

Dr. Millea suggested that a subcommittee be formed to closely examine Conditional Language Admission. Dr. Silva asked for volunteers to serve on the subcommittee. Dr. Monts agreed to chair and Drs. Hernandez and Cottrell agreed to serve, along with Ms. Betsy Mordecai from OGS and Ms. Molly Watkins from ESL.)

c) Dr. Millea raised the issue of the eminent closure of Aiken Village which is primarily used for housing graduate students and their families, many of them international.

Discussion followed. Graduate Council members expressed their concerns and opposition to this plan. Dr. Millea requested that an official letter of opposition be sent from the Graduate Council to President Keenum. Graduate Council Chair Dr. Silva agreed to draft a letter and disseminate for review/comments to Graduate Council members.

Meeting adjourned at 3:05 p.m.

The date for the next Graduate Council meeting has been set for Friday, October 22, 2010, at 1:30 p.m. in 611 Allen Hall.
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Number of Institutions where Graduate School grants degree: 6  Percentage: 32%
Number of Institutions where "other" grants degree: 13  Percentage: 68%
Number of Institutions with Graduate Dean's Signature: 10  Percentage: 53%
Number of Institutions with Academic Dean's Signature: 3  Percentage: 16%
Number of Institutions with University President's Signature: 18  Percentage: 95%
Number of Institutions with IHL or other governing body signature: 17  Percentage: 89%
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Number of Institutions where Graduate School grants degree: 0 Percentage: 0%
Number of Institutions where "other" grants degree: 5 100%
Number of Institutions with Graduate Dean's Signature: 4 80%
Number of Institutions with Academic Dean's Signature: 0 0%
Number of Institutions with University President's Signature: 4 80%
Number of Institutions with IHL or other governing body signature: 4 80%
Colleges Extend Conditional Admissions to Pull In More International Students

Candidates with strong academic backgrounds but weak language skills find more options in the U.S.

By Karin Fischer

Rasheed Alanazi's ambition was to study in the United States.

Standing in the way of the Saudi Arabian student's dream was the reality that his English skills weren't strong enough to allow him to keep pace in an American college classroom. In fact, Mr. Alanazi, 21, had had just two months of English instruction before he came to the United States, in February.

But he was able to win admission to Plymouth State University, in New Hampshire—with the stipulation that he raise his language proficiency before starting classes. Already, Mr. Alanazi, who has a scholarship from the Saudi government, has moved from a beginner to an intermediate level of English-language instruction and hopes to begin studying for a business degree next year.

"America is the best country is the world for studying," he says, in clear and careful English. "The best universities are here."

No firm statistics exist for the number of foreign students who, like Mr. Alanazi, are offered conditional admission to an American college even though their English-language skills might not meet entrance standards. With a provisional offer in hand, students then polish their English at the college or at an approved language school before taking an English-proficiency exam.

Still, international-admission counselors, overseas recruiters, and English-language instructors say the practice is growing in popularity. Some colleges, like Plymouth State, have embraced conditional admission as a way to expand foreign-student numbers.

And institutions with longstanding provisional-acceptance programs say interest is increasing sharply. At Iowa State University, which has offered conditional admission for three decades, intensive-English enrollments have tripled in recent years,
Colleges Extend Conditional Admissions to Pull In More International Students - International - The Chr...

says Patricia J. Parker, assistant director of admissions. "It's the wave of the future," says Robert (Bert) Barry, director of international services at Saint Louis University, which expects to enroll as many as 200 conditionally admitted students in its intensive-English program this fall.

Much of the demand is being driven by the record number of Chinese undergraduates pouring into American colleges. Some of these students need extra English instruction, while others simply do not have time to sit for the English test as well as their high-school exit exam and China's rigorous national university-entrance exam.

The practice also appeals to students who think a conditional-admission offer will help them get an American visa more easily than if they applied to go to the United States for language study only.

Studying in America "is a huge investment in these economic times," says Tara Kelley, director of the ELS Language Center, on the Clemson University campus. "Students want a guarantee."

For U.S. colleges, conditional admission is gaining acceptance as yet another recruiting tool in an increasingly competitive global marketplace for top foreign students. American institutions "used to be prepared to let students enter only on our own terms," says Mitch Leventhal, vice chancellor for global affairs at the State University of New York.

Now a growing number of colleges see conditional admission as "part of a comprehensive recruiting strategy," Mr. Leventhal says. "If you don't do it, you could cut off a substantial part of your market."

Learning the Language

International educators emphasize that conditionally admitted students meet all other university entrance requirements.

"Our conditional admits are not because we think there's any academic deficiency," says Sara Allaei, assistant dean for international affairs at Indiana University-Purdue University at Indianapolis, who notes that the institution's international students, on average, earn higher grades than their domestic counterparts. "They've definitely met our level of academic performance."

IUPUI may provisionally admit a student who does not meet the university's required scores on the Toefl or its competitor test, the
International English Language Testing System, better known by its acronym, IELTS, Ms. Allaei says.

Like many other institutions that give conditional admissions, IUPUI honors the offer for a year. Some students require a full year to become proficient, while others need just a semester or a summer to hone their skills.

Historically, only those institutions with homegrown intensive-English programs, like Iowa State and IUPUI, were able to issue provisional acceptances.

Today an increasing number of colleges have formed partnerships with independent providers. ELS Educational Services Inc., one of the largest, has some 55 centers nationwide, most on college campuses, and has admission agreements with hundreds more.

The University of La Verne, in California, signed on with ELS four years ago. Jeffrey L. Nonemaker, director of international-student recruitment and admissions, says going with the private company allowed La Verne to more rapidly expand its international enrollment without taking on new administrative burdens.

While students apply for admission to both the university and the language center, ELS staff members deal with much of the paperwork and issue entry documents, known as I-20 forms, to students.

ELS also handles the English-language instruction. Students in its program, which has 12 levels, from beginner to advanced, take classes 30 hours a week, for four-week sessions each. Students learn vocabulary and grammar, get practice speaking, listening, and writing, and are tutored in American culture and customs, the company's Ms. Kelley says. At upper levels, they use typical college texts.

For college admission, students must typically complete the ELS course work, retake and pass an English-proficiency exam, and, at some institutions, sit for a university-specific placement test.

Some colleges develop their own curricula. Saint Louis, for example, requires its intensive-English students to do community-based service-learning projects to give them speaking experience, outside the classroom and pairs them with honors students for additional one-on-one conversation practice, Mr. Barry says. More-proficient students are also able to enroll in some regular academic courses at
the private college even before they have completed the language program.

Percy Ho, vice president for overseas development at Aoji Education Group, a Chinese recruiting company, says American college administrators have told him they think conditional admission can be useful for students whose English-language skills mainly need fine tuning.

"Studying English in a classroom is different than when a student has to learn and live in a total-immersion environment," Mr. Ho says, adding that intensive-English programs frequently prepare international students for American academic culture, teaching them study skills and basic research methods. "These students often perform better."

Appealing to Students
This spring Aoji and ELS jointly sponsored a recruitment fair in Beijing, one of several the English-instruction company organized for its partner colleges. ELS gives little-known colleges access to its agent network, advice on recruiting overseas, and exposure to students, parents, and schools, says Susan Kassab, the company's director of university admission services.

Plymouth State, which participated in the Beijing fair, had struggled to recruit internationally, says Dick Hage, who recently stepped down as vice president for student affairs. "We're just not a household name."

After signing with ELS last September, Plymouth State received 58 international applications by the end of 2009. The college typically enrolls only about 70 overseas students in total.

Like Plymouth State, other U.S. colleges are under pressure to attract more international students as a way to globalize at home and, in an increasingly tight budget environment, to bolster their bottom lines. Some institutions see conditional admission as a method to tap a new group of foreign students. George daPonte, director of international admissions at the University of Tampa, says several colleagues in recent months have asked for a copy of his conditional-admission letter to use as a model for programs at their own institutions.

Mr. Nonemaker, of La Verne, says he also gets inquiries about conditional admission from international students. "They have friends who got a conditional letter, and they're interested, too," he
One of the main reasons for overseas demand, he says, is that students believe a university acceptance, even provisional, will help them get an American visa. (For their part, U.S. State Department officials have said they do not discriminate against students seeking language study only.)

Most of the colleges contacted by The Chronicle said Chinese students were by far the largest group of provisionally admitted students. "Our bread and butter," says Ms. Parker of Iowa State, who adds many are bright students who did not want to "dilute" their studies for the national university entrance exam by preparing for the English-language test at the same time.

Other sending countries include Japan, Saudi Arabia, South Korea, Thailand, Turkey, and Vietnam—nations with an expanding middle class or with large government-sponsored scholarship programs for overseas study, Ms. Kassab says. Interest, she says, tends to drop off as English proficiency improves in a country and as students and their parents gain greater sophistication about overseas study. The number of Korean students, for one, has fallen off as that market has "matured," she says.

A Viable Option

But turning a conditional-admission offer into a full-fledged acceptance doesn't come cheaply for students. While less expensive than regular undergraduate tuition, English-language programs are costly. Intensive-English students at Saint Louis, for example, pay $11,010 in tuition for a nine-month program, with fees rising to around $25,000 with living expenses factored in. The expense means that conditional admission may not be a viable option for many international students.

Offering provisional acceptances also works far better for undergraduate than graduate students, as most upper-level students must already have greater English proficiency to do well on the GRE. In addition, graduate programs, particularly on the doctoral level, tend to take on just a handful of students each year and therefore can be choosier.

At least one university that previously offered conditional admission has backed away from the practice. Golden Gate University's conditional-admission program was a moneymaker, says Karen McRobie, director of the San Francisco institution's Preparation for Language and University Studies, or PLUS, program, but it was
halted in 2003 out of concern that it "wasn't integrated well enough into the university's mission."

The conditional-admission students were "free agents," Ms. McRobie says; as a result, few eventually enrolled at the university. By contrast, the PLUS program—which pairs regular course work with English-language instruction and intensive academic support—has a 90-percent retention rate, she says.

International-admissions officials at other colleges dismiss such concerns. At Saint Louis, more than 80 percent of the students offered conditional admission enroll at the university, Mr. Barry says.

"The message we give is," he says, "if students are likely to succeed, we don't want English to be a barrier."
CONDITIONAL LANGUAGE ADMISSION

FOR WHOM

Designed for international graduate applicants who have either no TOEFL score or have too low a score to have their application processed (currently cannot grant conditional admission to any international graduate student without the appropriate TOEFL (or equivalent) score)

JUSTIFICATION

Many international students who have been awarded a government scholarship or been placed by agencies such as LASPAU (sponsored Latin-American students) or IIE have not had an opportunity to take the TOEFL yet. These high quality prospective graduate students are going to other institutions that already have a Conditional Language Admission in place. If we bring them to campus and they pass ESL requirements, then they can be admitted the following year.

LOGISTICS

Conditional Language Admission would allow the granting of conditional admission to prospective graduate students based on passing required ESL courses during the academic year to earn true admission into the selected degree program. Conditional Language Admission students would not be allowed to take any classes other than ESL and a hold would be placed on registration. If the student is unsuccessful in passing ESL, he/she will not be admitted into the degree program.

BENEFITS

- Department - If the student passes ESL, the department will have a fully funded graduate student; better control of the quality of international students who are admitted into graduate school (MSU International Education staff teach the courses)

- Student - The student receives one year of ESL training, even if admission cannot be granted because requirements are not met.

- ESL Center – Receives revenue from the student's sponsor for ESL study.

DRAWBACKS

- Additional workload for International Graduate Admission Staff