Dr. John Boyle called the meeting to order at 1:30 p.m. in 611 Allen Hall and asked those present to introduce themselves.

The minutes of the August meeting were presented. A motion was made, seconded, and passed unanimously to adopt the minutes with minor editorial changes.

A motion was made and seconded to accept the modification and deletion of graduate courses submitted by the University Committee on Courses and Curricula (UCCC). Proposed curricula modification was in the Master of Agribusiness Management (MABM) (College of Agriculture and Life Sciences and College of Business and Industry). Proposed curricula deletion was the Master of Science in Systems Management (MSSM). Motion was approved unanimously.

Dr. Person reported that enrollment continues to increase. There is a 9.26% increase in enrollment of on-campus students this fall, which interprets to 195 students. This brings on-campus enrollment to over 2600. In looking at enrollment itself, about 51% of that was a combination of international students (30.26%) and minority students (21.03%), so a little more than 50% of that figure or exactly 100 students consist collectively of international and minority students. The increase in new graduate students was 116 this fall more than last year. Based on last fall’s enrollment of new students, we moved from 574 to 690 students. It is hoped that this trend will continue. There has been some discussion of enrollment management so we may end up limiting enrollment at some point in the future.

Dr. Person distributed the evaluation of the TA workshop and asked that suggestions for improving the workshop be made to Dr. Person or to Cathy Sides.

Dr. Person reported on the status of the application submitted to the National Science Foundation through the Mississippi Research Consortium. The MRC is a combination of the doctoral degree granting institutions in the State of Mississippi and is coordinated with the vice presidents for research at the doctoral degree granting institutions. The University of Mississippi is taking the lead in this project, and we have been informed that NSF has approved our grant for $500,000 per year for the next five years. That will be a joint project with Mississippi State University, Jackson State University, the University of Mississippi, and the University of Southern Mississippi during that period of time. The amount MSU will receive from NSF will be $100,000 per year for the next five
years. When the grant was developed, we put in an equal amount of matching funds so it will be a $200,000 project per year for the next five years as far as Mississippi State is concerned. The purpose of the project is to attract outstanding doctoral students in areas where minority students are underrepresented in fields of study. We will begin this project sometime soon. There will be a public announcement during the month of October. These funds will be used for recruitment and the provision of fellowships for students to engage in doctoral level study. There will be a combination of programs and seminars related to success and helping students to matriculate through their doctoral program. The details will be released as the program unfolds. There will be a meeting in Jackson on October 19 where the co-principal investigators will sit down and talk about the program and work out more details as to how it will be implemented. This is the first year of the project beginning October 1. On the 20th there will be a joint press release after presentation to the Chief Academic Officers.

Dale Welch reported the number of Ph.D. graduates in August as 40 rather than 41 as previously reported.

The library has scheduled a thesis/dissertation workshop for the 5th and 6th of October. Notices have been sent out.

The last date to apply for graduation this semester was September 15. All the information has not been recorded by the Registrar’s Office so she could not report on the number who applied.

Cathy Sides has sent out catalog materials to the department for revisions, and it is due back November 1.

Dr. Person reported that the Graduate Studies Office does not have a secretary at this time and hopes to remedy that situation soon.

Dr. Boyle reported that Dr. Rent, with the help of Dr. Person and Dale Welch, has compiled a list of the decisions to be made by the deans and functions of the Office of Graduate Studies. The memo was distributed to the Council. It has been sent to all deans and department heads.

Matthew Burnham, GSA President, gave a report on GSA activities. Announcements of monthly meetings and workshops are being placed in the Reflector and are being sent by email. Email addresses for graduate students are on file with the GSA. The GSA will use their budget for office expenses, photos, travel and other GSA functions. A committee of five was set up to draft a letter of concern regarding activity fees. Mr. Burnham would like to present the letter to the Graduate Council. Mr. Burnham has met with Dean Coleman, Gail Peyton, Stephen Cunetto and Suzy Turner regarding the Graduate Student Fair to be held September 29 and 30. He asked that all graduate students be encouraged to participate in it. The GSA will have a booth at the fair. The GSA will give out ten travel vouchers throughout the year for $100 above and beyond what the department actually pays. The GSA is concerned that the cost of parking tickets has been increased and nothing has been done about parking problems. Graduate Studies will provide a computer for the GSA to replace theirs. The TA awards banquet will be held March 24, 2000, at Bost. Mr. Burnham has attended all Graduate Council and Research Council meetings. Photos for the Reveille will be taken at the next meeting of the GSA. The GSA barbecue will be November 5; all coordinators and Graduate Council members are invited.
Dr. Boyle brought up the issue of modification of voting procedures. He distributed a copy of a report from a Library subcommittee on library voting procedures as a suggestion to streamline voting by using email. Susan Bridges chaired the subcommittee for the Library. Dr. Boyle asked for comments and suggestions for revision. For controversial issues the Graduate Council requires a majority of members to carry an issue or 2/3 of those voting to carry the issue. Susan Bridges reported that the Library has email votes on procedures such as voting for journals, changes in governance, or policy changes. On most things there is no email vote. Votes on routine business are taken by a show of hands. If there is something substantial such as modification of governance or policy, then votes will be scheduled for the following meeting. This gives people a chance to look at the document by email, and it will allow people who cannot attend a meeting to vote by email. A tally of email votes will be obtained and added to the votes of those attending. Concern was expressed about people voting on issues who did not attend discussion meetings. An outline of discussion is distributed with the minutes before actual email voting is accepted. This will allow people who cannot attend to vote on issues. The only person who will have knowledge of how people voted will be the Chair. Since the Chair does not ordinarily vote on an issue, then the Chair will collect the ballots. Discussion followed as to whether the Chair should vote as representative of a certain body. Under parliamentary procedure, the Chair only votes if there is a tie.

Dr. Boyle suggested that the Council be prepared to vote on this issue at the next meeting with appropriate modifications to reflect Graduate Council concerns. The modified version will be distributed before the next meeting for discussion and for modifications before voting on it. The question was asked who would determine whether an issue is routine or significant. The council would decide whether an issue is routine or whether it will be voted on at a later time.

A question was asked as to whether there is a formal policy in effect regarding dismissal from the Graduate Council for excessive absences. Dr. Boyle stated that someone who has been elected couldn’t be eliminated from the Council. It was suggested that a letter be sent to that person’s dean regarding the excessive absences and that something could be done from the college. This issue can be considered in the spring.

Dr. Boyle asked for consideration of moving the December meeting date due to graduation. The date was changed to December 10.

Dale Welch brought up the issue of programs of study being housed in the Office of Graduate Studies. Master’s programs should be sent to the OGS the semester the student is graduating. Doctoral programs should be sent to OGS by the beginning of the second semester. Ms. Welch asked for guidance on how strict they should be on this. It is the student’s program, and some people have interpreted that as not sending the programs for master’s students to the Office of Graduate Studies. The policy on keeping them in the Office of Graduate Studies was established by the Graduate Council.

Dr. Rent stated that in the past every time changes were made, the revised program of study would be sent to OGS. The staff would have to record them and it was time-consuming. It is important to have a program of study; it is a tentative agreement, but he does not think it should be kept in Office of Graduate Studies. Changes could be recorded in the student’s file in the department and then when the student is ready to graduate and is ready for degree audit, then the program could be sent to
The OGS does not sign off on the program of study. The graduate coordinator’s signature is the last one on the form. The OGS does the degree audit. If a student doesn’t meet the requirements for graduation, it would be the fault of the graduate coordinator or the department.

The main thing OGS checks is that the student did take the courses listed on the program of study. There was an instance this summer where a student did not graduate because an advisor failed to follow guidelines. Nothing could be done to work out the situation. The student lacked hours and will graduate in December. Departments are required to initiate the changes in programs of study. Transcripts are monitored to see that courses are in order. Sometimes a student will mistakenly register for the undergraduate level of a split-level course. Using Banner, graduate students cannot register for an undergraduate course, and undergraduates cannot register for graduate level courses.

Programs of study are not signed by the dean. The student who did not graduate this summer did not have a program of study. It had not been submitted to the graduate coordinator. The main concern is that departments set up programs and make students aware of them. A student should sign his/her program of study.

Doctoral programs of study should be sent to OGS after the first semester when students are enrolled.

Based on the new criteria, it is the dean of each degree granting unit that has the final say. If a student does not meet requirements, any waiver of policy would have to be granted by the college dean. Every dean of a degree-granting unit is effectively the graduate dean. This has been discussed with the deans on several occasions.

Any admission waiver is sent to the VPAA for monitoring to make sure that the decentralization does not result in variance of standards across the colleges. The deans have been asked not to delegate waivers of standards.

Documentation does need to be in the departments with the original copy sent forward to the OGS. If sent forward, the student’s signature needs to be on the document so that OGS knows that the student is aware of it.

It was suggested that the original signed program of study be sent to the OGS with no changes being sent until time for the degree audit. The original program of study will be on file with the student’s signature.

Another problem is limited personnel in OGS. Cathy Sides is graduate program assistant. She has the responsibility of publishing the catalog. She coordinates the TA workshop and works with TOEFL students. She does not have time to enter changes to program of study. This summer the only programs checked were the degree candidates, and there were over 300 of them.

Diane Wolfe is in the process of rewriting the admissions letter, and she has been asked to include a statement to the student (especially international students) that the student is responsible for obtaining the graduate catalog/bulletin when they arrive on campus and for knowing the rules and regulations. This has not been done in the past. That makes the student aware that they are
There is a consensus for keeping the doctoral program of study in the OGS but not sending changes forward. Students should sign programs of study. This issue will be brought forward at the next meeting as old business and for a vote. Dr. Boyle requested that Dale Welch prepare a proposal for the next meeting.

The master’s program of study should also be signed by the student.

It is now required that the minor graduate coordinator sign the program along with the minor professor. The decision as to who qualifies as a minor faculty member or minor professor is made by the department with the minor with the agreement of the head of the committee.

The question was asked if the dean would be required to sign the programs of study. The dean of the Graduate School used to sign the programs of study, but this has not been done in quite a while. As it stands now, there is no need for the dean to sign. If the graduate coordinator signs it, the major professor signs it, the committee signs it, and the student signs it, that should be sufficient.

Motion was made that programs of study, both doctoral and master’s, have a signature line for the student. Motion was seconded and approved unanimously.

Dr. Kohers chaired a committee over the summer to suggest topics for the Graduate Council to consider. Alex Friend, Ted Kohers and John Boyle were selected to discuss the first topic: the procedure for selecting graduate faculty. Some years ago a procedure was instituted to have graduate faculty status, which was approved by the Graduate Council. There were two levels of status introduced and the bottom line had to do with chairing graduate committees. When the graduate dean disappeared, and the Office of Graduate Studies appeared, Dr. Altenkirch, Vice President for Research, took over. He essentially said we shouldn’t have graduate faculty status. It was pointed out that that issue was voted on by the graduate faculty, and it could not be eliminated by virtue of saying we’re not going to have it.

Dr. Rent stated that there is a SACS guideline on graduate faculty status. If there is no distinction, the university will be written up because it says in the criteria that there should be a clear distinction. There is nothing mentioned about levels. Eligibility requirements for faculty members for teaching graduate courses must be clearly defined and publicized.

Dr. Boyle stated that there is a lot of resistance among department heads to having to have people identified as Level 1 and 2 because you have to renew their membership every five years. It is viewed as a lot of extra paperwork.

Dr. Kohers asked if graduate status should be related to the individual’s ability to contribute to graduate education. If an individual cannot contribute, he should not have graduate status. There are problems with the statement that “the individual must have demonstrated excellent and current performance.” Ultimately, the emphasis or focus has to be on the ability to do relatively current research. Another problem is the statement “criteria prescribed in the tenure and promotion policies document of the individual’s college.” With different deans making those decisions, we may end up having too many different standards. According to SACS, “all policies and regulations effecting
graduate curricula and requirements leading to this … should be formulated by the graduate faculty.”

Dr. Rent said that the Graduate Council is the policy-recommending body. The Graduate Council can recommend to the graduate faculty to have a policy, and the graduate faculty votes in favor of the policy. The question is whether the Graduate Council wants to change the current policy, if not, there is no issue.

Dr. Boyle stated that current policy says that the individual’s college or school determines the standards. The difficulty will come about because different colleges will have different things going into the graduate office. Graduate research means different things to different colleges. So, it may be difficult to have a uniform standard.

Dr. Rent suggested that the Graduate Council provide some guidelines about how to interpret criteria. He has suggested to the deans that they should contact Dr. Person or Dale Welch on special requests for help in interpreting criteria. One of the things that the Graduate Council can do is to develop ways to monitor the decentralized system to see if it’s working. We need to adapt to it and monitor it to make sure it’s doing what the graduate faculty want it to do. If it’s not, then the Graduate Council needs to make a recommendation to change it. Ways to monitor the system should be devised that won’t take too much time. Presently admissions waivers are being monitored. Diane Wolfe is sending the information to the Provost Office.

Dr. Person stated that most faculty are at Level 2. This mechanism renews every five years so people are staggered. This would involve reviewing fewer than 200 people a year for graduate faculty status. That might not be too difficult to monitor, if we had some system in place.

Dr. Boyle stated that the provost has been very clear as far as promotion and tenure are concerned. He wants to see publications. One problem is that the policy says “creative endeavors.” This does not necessarily mean research; it could mean artwork. The policy also reads “promotion and tenure policies of the individual’s college/school.” This policy is very consistent with what has been done at the college level. There are different standards among the different units. There are always going to be different standards, depending on the field.

The question was raised regarding serving on a certain number of master’s committees before being elevated to Level 2.

Dale Welch stated that under the old policy a faculty member had to serve as major professor for two master’s students before serving as chair of a doctoral committee.

Dr. Kohers stated that the underlying criteria for graduate faculty status should be sustained involvement in graduate education and a sustained record of scholarly research or creative endeavors.

Dr. Bridges stated that not allowing new faculty to work with Ph.D. students would serve as an impediment to recruiting.

Dr. Rent stated that some of the young faculty right out of the graduate schools may be the most skilled in directing dissertations.
Suggestion was made that new faculty be allowed to co-direct or co-chair dissertations.

Dr. Person stated current policy reflects that the “graduate council recommends that Level 1 assistant professors chairing or directing their first doctoral/dissertation committee be appointed as co-chairs or co-directors.”

The question was asked if all departments have master’s degree programs to give faculty that type of opportunity. In some particular areas the master’s program is much smaller than the Ph.D. program, and master’s students are few and far between.

Dr. Bridges made a motion that the policy remain the same with no alteration and that new faculty be allowed to direct doctoral programs with the recommendation that they be co-chair or co-director. While the experienced faculty have the experience in how to manage the paperwork and the program of study and the exam processes, the new people are doing really interesting research.

Dr. Boyle stated that it appeared that most members still wanted to retain (a) graduate level status and (b) graduate level 1 and 2 status. There are some suggestions to modify the policy and better monitor status level 1 and 2.

The difference between levels is in excellence in research and intellectual ability and supervising a graduate program. It was suggested that the Graduate Council make a statement or recommendation to the fact that someone should have experience at graduate advising before they are able to chair a doctoral program.

Dr. Rent stated that administering the policy is the job of the dean and department head. The Council’s job is to develop the policy.

Motion was made that the policy stand as is with minor editorial changes with the onus being left on the units to monitor themselves or on the Graduate Council to demand compliance at a later date.

Motion was seconded and was approved. The Chair will report to the Provost that the Graduate Council has affirmed the criteria for graduate faculty membership with minor editorial changes. The Provost will send it to the deans.

The final item, teaching and research assistants’ stipends and tuition waivers, will be discussed at the next meeting.

Meeting adjourned at 3:00 p.m.