

**Graduate Council
Mississippi State University**

Number: 1

Date: September 28, 2007

Present: J. Ainsworth, H. Bailey (for N. Filipov), L. Barrow, W. Batchelor, R. Burrell (for R. King), D. Cartwright (for M. Binkley), T. Chamblee, R. Conerly, S. Cottrell (for P. Bonfanti), J. Gilbert, J. Goodin, T. Hosie, K. Lee, J. Schmidt (for F. Coleman), S. Morris, S. Nobles, W. Person, P. Rabideau, D. Reynolds, R. Shivaji (for S. Oppenheimer), B. Spencer, P. Sullivan, W. Taylor, J. To, M. Thomas, J. West, S. Willard, N. Younan

Absent: J. Chromiak, L. Cossman, D. Jackson, G. Dunaway, R. Kaminski, S. Minchew, K. Schulz, F. Sparks, D. Wise

Guests: M.A. Jones, T. West

1. Dr. Barbara Spencer called the meeting to order at 1:30 p.m. in 611 Allen Hall.
2. Dr. Spencer asked that everyone introduce themselves.
3. Dr. Spencer asked for any revisions to the minutes (May 14, 2007).

Motion was made by Mr. Mark Thomas and seconded by Dr. Daniel Reynolds to accept the minutes.

Minutes were approved.

4. No University Committee on Courses and Curricula (UCCC) Report
5. Report from Graduate Studies (OGS) (Handout)

Dr. William Person presented the following report:

- a) The recent addition of two professional staff members in the Office of the Graduate School was announced. Ms. Robyn Conerly and Ms. Julie Goodin joined our office in June 2007 as the Data Management Coordinator and Program Coordinator, respectively.
- b) A record high graduate enrollment for 2007-2008 has been achieved with 3,550 students, an increase of 238 students or 7.2% (see attached). Additional bullets on graduate enrollment include the following:
 - The increase in graduate enrollment for this year represents 28.6% of the total University enrollment increase

- New graduate students increased by 15.8%
 - Out-of-state graduate students increased by 16.5%
 - International graduate students increased by 15.6%
 - Doctoral student enrollment increased by 4.2%
 - Graduate students represent approximately 21% of the total University enrollment for this year
- c) A total of 344 students graduated this summer, 304 master's, 12 educational specialist, and 28 doctoral students. We redlined a total of 40 applicants (31 master's, 2 educational specialist, and 7 doctoral).
- d) On September 24, 2007, we implemented our electronic admission process with the College of Business and Industry and have admitted our first student using the WorkFlow Process. We are currently looking at methods of training for graduate coordinators so that we can begin to implement WorkFlow in other colleges.
- e) Our office received an award for approximately \$124,000 from the Institute of International Education to provide a second three-week Pre-Academic Program on July 21 through August 11, 2007, for 30 International Fulbright Fellows from 25 countries. Pam Sullivan, Julie Goodin, Molly Watkins, and several other MSU staff members worked extremely hard to provide an outstanding experience for these scholars.
- f) The Department of Chemistry has received a second funding cycle from Graduate Assistance in Areas of National Need (GAANN). We currently have four (4) GAANN fellows in Chemistry.
- g) Our AGEM Summer Graduate Bridge Program went extremely well. We had five AGEM scholars to participate in the program from July 5-August 3, 2007.
- h) A total of 111 students to participate in the International TA Workshop on August 6-10, 2007. Of this number 83 passed and 28 failed.
- i) A total of 271 students to participate in the General TA Workshop on August 13-14, 2007. Of this number, 233 passed and 38 failed.
- j) On January 4 and 7, 2008, we are planning our inaugural Spring General TA Workshop. This workshop will be for those who were granted waivers for Fall as well as new TAs.
- k) Over 350 students participated in the New Graduate Student Orientation on August 15, 2007.
- l) Thirteen (13) proposals for Recruitment Assistance Grants (RAG) have been received from five (5) of the eight (8) colleges. Many of the proposals indicate intent to utilize

both departmental and pledged funds from the academic dean's office to support their recruitment initiatives. Overall funds requested from the Office of the Graduate School total \$7,275.

- m) Our office participated in Graduate and Professional Day Fairs at Mississippi Valley State University and Tougaloo College the week of September 17, 2007. We will also participate in Graduate and Professional Day Fairs at MSU and Tuskegee University in October. Information will be sent to department heads regarding our contacts of potential students at these fairs.

6. Report from Graduate Student Association (GSA)

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

Mr. Thomas stated that a number of local businesses are willing to give graduate students discounts but had no way to identify them. GSA was able to work with Dr. Person and Dr. Matt Raven, Mike Rackley and Timothy Griffin from ITS to establish a designation for graduate students on the MSU Student ID Card.

Dr. Gilbert added that every graduate student who has an E & G funded assistantship this year has received a \$1,000 increase in stipend, courtesy of President Foglesong.

7. Old Business

- a) Library Proquest electronic submission procedures for theses and dissertations (Handout)

Ms. June Schmidt stated that this is only a very small procedural change to the electronic submission process and asked Ms. Mary Ann Jones from the Office of Thesis and Dissertation Format Review to explain.

Ms. Jones stated that Proquest requested a change in MSU procedure of sending documents to them. In the past, we gave Proquest access to our administrative module which caused security problems. The new process will eliminate that and utilize the new online Proquest submission system. For the student, the new process will involve one additional step. Students will submit their approved theses or dissertations to Proquest themselves. After receiving notification of submission from Proquest, the Office of Thesis and Dissertation Format Review will then approve the student for graduation.

Discussion followed. It was established that the Office of Thesis and Dissertation Format Review will automatically receive notification once a student submits. Most of the major universities in the country are already using Proquest's electronic submission system and many more are signing on every day.

- b) Ability of International Students to apply electronically

Ms. Rita Burrell explained that this issue applies only to international students who want to apply to distance programs electronically. Currently, international students are only able to apply to main campus programs online but not to any of the distance programs, such as the Distance MBA or the Distance Master of Engineering.

Dr. Spencer asked whether Graduate Council had any concerns regarding correcting this problem. She stated that this issue does not involve any policy changes and is clearly a technical issue. When the electronic application link was discussed last year, international electronic applications to distance programs were overlooked. Dr. Spencer will request Mr. Tommy Parker from ITS to include international electronic applications to distance programs.

c) Policies regarding transferring of international credits (Handout)

Dr. Spencer stated that this issue was initially discussed during the April 27, 2007, Graduate Council meeting where Dr. Spencer alerted Graduate Council that the current policy in place may not be conducive to MSU's goal to become a more international university. The current MSU policy (Registrar's Office) states that transfer courses from international universities/colleges can be transferred only as S grades to MSU. However, graduate student policy (current Graduate Bulletin, p. 56) does not allow for transfer of anything but letter grades.

Dr. Spencer disseminated a report compiled by MBA students which showed data of transfer policies at peer institutions. She restated the wording of our current transfer policy, especially pertaining to the Registrar's Office.

Dr. Spencer said that the current policy of transferring courses from international universities/colleges only as S grades to MSU was not written down anywhere but instead became a practice that the Registrar's Office followed.

Dr. Spencer referred to information in the handout regarding this issue from the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS). She pointed out that SACS places the responsibility for the "academic quality of any course work or credit record on the institution's transcript" on the institution. However, SACS also "...supports institutions' autonomy in determining their own standards for transfer of academic credit" based on "...level, content, quality, comparability, and degree program relevance" and "...encourages member institutions to review their transfer policies and procedures with a view toward making transfer of credit easier of students while continuing to honor their obligation to maintain academic quality and integrity." Dr. Spencer stressed that "...accreditation standards do not mandate that institutions accept transfer credit only from regionally accredited institutions" and that "it should not be the only criterion used for acceptability."

Dr. Jerry Gilbert pointed out that SACS also states in another section on foreign transfer credit, not referenced in the handout, its implication that the accepting institutions will monitor the faculty of the foreign institution. Essentially, we need to verify that the

faculty foreign institutions have the same credentials as faculty at our home institutions. There is an obligation for the accepting institution to be in close contact with the foreign institution and to evaluate their faculty and programs on an ongoing basis. This creates an additional workload for the accepting institution that is unnecessary with regional accredited institutions. If SACS determines that we are not properly monitoring those foreign institutions, we could be cited.

Dr. Spencer stated that she will review that piece of information from SACS. However, she pointed out that many departments already have relationships with foreign institutions and many of their students come from those particular foreign universities.

Dr. Spencer pointed to three trends that emerged from data collected at eleven peer universities in regard to transfer credit. One trend is that the process of the transfer begins with the department, a second trend is that a grade of B or better is required for a course to transfer, and the third trend is that grades are not actually transferred in and included on the student's GPA. Different institutions denote transfer courses in different ways, but none of them actually transfer in letter grades.

Dr. Gilbert expressed that the peer report was not specific enough because it lacked information pertaining to international transfer credit only; the information collected refers to transfer credit in general. He stated that transfer credit from regionally accredited institutions and foreign institutions are entirely different issues.

Dr. Person reiterated Dr. Gilbert's statement that accepting nine hours of transfer credit in general would be different from accepting nine hours of transfer credit from an international institution. Dr. Gilbert explained that the accepting institution does not have the assurance of an accrediting body for foreign transfer work.

Discussion followed regarding the difficulty of determining the "meaning" of a grade from one institution versus another. Dr. Spencer acknowledged the difficulties and expressed her frustration with the current MSU policy which does not allow for any foreign graduate transfer credit. She proposed a change to the current policy what would allow individual departments to determine whether to allow international transfer credit on a case-by-case basis and called for a motion.

Dr. Peter Rabideau pointed out that the proposed change is geared toward lifting the prohibition of transfer credit from international institutions.

Discussion followed. Dr. Gilbert stated that allowing only pass/fail credit for transfer courses would make the proposed changes to current MSU international transfer credit policy much easier and well within SACS compliance.

The current graduate policy on transfer credit (Graduate Bulletin 2006-2007, pages 55-56):

Transfer credit hours from another university may be accepted toward fulfilling requirements for a master's degree at MSU provided they were earned in programs fully accredited by the appropriate regional and national accrediting bodies; provided they contribute to the current program of graduate study; and provided they were taken within the six-year time limit for the master's degree. **Courses in which grades of C or lower were earned or grades of Pass/Fail or S/U are not accepted for transfer.** Transfer credit may not constitute more than nine semester hours of course work except for master's programs requiring more than 40 hours, in which case transfer credits may constitute up to 30 percent of the total credit hours. Up to one-third of the required hours for a minor (nine hours at the master's level) may be transferred to MSU (per Graduate Council, September 2005). Transfer credit from one master's degree program at MSU toward a second MSU master's degree is also limited to a maximum of nine hours. A minimum of 21 semester hours must be earned at the Mississippi State University main campus and/or the Meridian Center. With departmental and college approval a student may transfer up to nine hours of graduate credit for military coursework evaluated by the American Council of Education (ACE) (per Graduate Council February 2006). *(Note: This wording has changed in the Graduate Bulletin 2007-2008 edition)*

The proposed change to graduate policy on transfer credit:

Transfer credit hours from domestic or international universities may be accepted toward fulfilling requirements for graduate degrees at MSU provided they contribute to the current program of graduate study; provided they are judged to be of the appropriate level and quality; and provided they were taken within the stated time limit for the degree. Courses in which grades of C or lower were earned or grades of Pass/Fail or S/U are not accepted for transfer. Transfer credit may not constitute more than nine semester hours of course work except for master's programs requiring more than 40 hours, in which case transfer credits may constitute up to 30 percent of the total credit hours. .

Students seeking to transfer credits from universities outside the U.S. will be responsible for submitting transcripts, syllabi, and course descriptions, in English, to their committee or department for review. The departments will determine which courses are appropriate for transfer based on their assessment of the content

and will work with the Graduate School to ensure that a grade of B or better has been earned. The Registrar's Office will note such courses on the transcript followed by a "T" to indicate that they have been transferred from another university. Transfer credit grades will not be included in the student's transcript nor in the calculation of the student's MSU grade point average.

Discussion followed regarding the transfer designation on the MSU transcript and more specific wording. It was decided that the third sentence in the proposed change will be amended as follows:

The Registrar's Office will note such courses on the transcript followed by a "S" to indicate that they have been transferred from an international university.

Discussion followed. It was determined that MSU will allow transfer credit the equivalent of a grade of B or better to be listed on the transcript with an "S" grade. While MSU will not allow the transfer of "S" grades from another institution, MSU will enter a grade of B or better as an "S" grade on the student's MSU transcript.

Motion was made by Dr. Nick Younan to accept the change in policy for graduate student transfer credit. Dr. Ratnasingham Shivaji seconded the motion with the noted corrections.

Motion carried by acclamation.

Since clarification is needed as to where else in the Graduate Bulletin the policy of transfer credit may need to be changed, Dr. Spencer once again called on her already established subcommittee of Dr. Shivaji, Ms. Burrell, Mr. Thomas and Dr. Tom Hosie to accomplish this task.

8. New Business

a) Undergraduate Enrollment in Graduate Courses

Dr. Spencer raised the issue of whether MSU should allow undergraduate students from other institutions to enroll in graduate classes. Our current policy allows MSU seniors who are within 12 hours of completing their undergraduate degree to enroll in up to 9 hours of graduate classes. Dr. Spencer explained that MSU graduate recruiting efforts can be enhanced by extending our current policy to outstanding seniors at other institutions with whom MSU has a written agreement or a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU).

Discussion followed. It was determined that students cannot "doubledip" and apply those courses toward their undergraduate degree. Dr. Spencer stated that she will write

up a draft policy regarding this issue, and Graduate Council can vote at the next meeting where the item will once again be on the agenda under “Old Business.”

b) Graduate Council Faculty Subcommittee Recommendations (Handout)

Dr. Spencer distributed a draft letter to President Foglesong regarding the organizational structure of the Office of the Graduate School. The letter proposes a return to a more decentralized model with an Associate Vice President for Graduate Studies under the leadership of the Vice President for Research and Development (ORED). This issue will be discussed again at the next meeting.

c) Faculty Council Bylaws and Membership Issues

Dr. Spencer charged the same subcommittee of Dr. Shivaji, Ms. Burrell, Mr. Thomas and Dr. Hosie with drafting bylaws and membership/organizational rules for the Graduate Council. She stated that there seems to be a problem with the number of ex-officio members versus elected ones in Graduate Council and the process/policy of electing and appointing members. This issue will be discussed again at the next meeting.

Meeting adjourned at 3:05 p.m.

The next Graduate Council meeting will be held on October 26, 2007, at 611 Allen Hall.