

Graduate Council Minutes
Mississippi State University
2001-2002

NUMBER: 1

DATE: January 26, 2001

PRESENT: John Boyle, Chair; F. Coleman, G. Dunaway, L. Hanson, D. Hare, T. Hosie, D. Wolfe for J. Inmon, R. Jenkins, T. Kohers, K. Paul, W. Person, L. Reinschmiedt, G. Rent, S. Schoenholtz, C. Sides, A. Netterville for M. Thorne, D. Welch, J. Wesley.

ABSENT: B. Altenkirch, S. Bullington, R. Harkess, J. Miller, B. Spencer, C. Taylor, C. Weaver

GUESTS: Mrs. Eula Betts

1. Dr. John Boyle called the meeting to order at 1:30 p.m. in room 611 Allen Hall.
2. Dr. Boyle presented the minutes for the Graduate Council meeting held on November 17, 2000. A motion was made, seconded, and passed to approve the minutes of the November 17, 2000 meeting of the Graduate Council.
3. Dr. Boyle presented the report from the University Committee on Courses and Curricula (UCCC). Included in the report were proposals from the Department of Agricultural Economics to modify the Doctor of Philosophy degree program in Applied Economics and to modify the Master of Science degree program in Agricultural Economics.

The Doctor of Philosophy degree in Applied Economics is a joint program between the Department of Agricultural Economics and the College of Business and Industry. Ms. Diane Wolfe explained that students are admitted through the College of Business and Industry for the joint program. Dr. George Rent stated that when the original proposals were approved through the Mississippi Board of Institutions of Higher Learning (IHL) only one track was approved with one CIP number. It was intended that two CIP numbers be approved so students could register for either track. Dr. Lynn Reinschmiedt stated that because this is a joint program both departments should receive credit. The Council members are not certain that a program can have two CIP numbers.

Dr. Reinschmiedt explained that it was evidently not clear in the original doctoral program proposals that the courses had not been developed. The new courses being proposed in the doctoral program modification will be offered in fall 2001 and will be taught in part or in whole by faculty from the Department of Economics.

A question was raised about the longevity and viability of the master's program in Agricultural Economics because the doctoral program in Applied Economics allows entry from the

bachelor's level. It was also pointed out that admission has been temporarily suspended for the Master of Science degree program in Agricultural Economics. Dr. Reinschmiedt stated that the suspension is temporary because there were not enough students to justify the allocation of limited resources. Dr. Reinschmiedt stated that the proposed course modifications for the master's program are for existing courses that are not currently being taught. Dr. Reinschmiedt stated that he would not want to eliminate a program that is temporarily on hold.

The Council agreed to table the proposals until the February meeting when a representative from the Department of Agricultural Economics could attend and provide additional information.

Dr. Tom Hosie suggested that the Council may need to address the various issues that have developed from these proposals such as the process of approving new program proposals without course proposals being included and program modifications that require course modifications. Dr. Boyle agreed that the Council should address these issues.

4. Dr. William Person announced that Ms. Kerry Paul has accepted the position of Administrative Assistant I in the Office of Graduate Studies. Ms. Paul will assist in handling the office budget and daily operations and will also assist with the Alliance for Graduate Education in Mississippi (AGEM) program.

Dr. Person informed the Graduate Council that the AGEM conference is under way at the Eagle Ridge Conference Center in Raymond and is being attended by more than 350 people. There are some outstanding, potential students in science, math, and engineering at the conference, and several MSU faculty members, in those respective areas, are also attending.

In December of 2000, the Office of Graduate Studies along with the Departments of Chemistry, Mathematics & Statistics, and Physics submitted three proposals to the U.S. Department of Education for funding in the GAANN program (Graduate Assistance in Areas of National Need). If fully funded, support will be received for a total of fifteen doctoral level students in the areas mentioned, for three years, at a level of \$15,000 per fellowship plus \$10,500 institutional allowance. By the later part of March, the Department of Education will have responded.

Dr. Person stated that spring enrollment is slightly up from last year, considering tenth-day enrollment data. Dr. Person distributed some data he compiled regarding the dismissals that have occurred this spring. The report states that to date 34 students have been dismissed. The report includes the programs from which they have been dismissed, the programs of study these students were seeking, and the time these students enrolled, as a collective group. The report shows that a large portion of these students did not enter until the fall semester of 2000 and at least 14 of these students made it through only one semester.

Dr. Person stated that Ms. Cathy Sides has requested changes for the 2001-2002 *Graduate Bulletin*. Ms. Sides set a deadline for *Bulletin* information to be returned and is working hard to make sure that the document is completed and ready for publication. Dr. Person requested that everyone help out by returning their information to Ms. Sides in a timely manner.

5. There was no report from the Graduate Student Association.

6. Dr. Boyle stated that for approximately four months the Graduate Council has been considering the compliance issue of Graduate Faculty representation at doctoral examinations. The former Graduate School procedures stated that a Graduate Faculty representative would attend all doctoral examinations. This would include the preliminary/comprehensive examination and the defense of dissertation. This practice has gone by the wayside in recent years primarily because of lack of faculty interest. Dr. Boyle explained that when the Graduate Council first considered this issue it was recommended that a committee of 20 graduate faculty be established to attend doctoral examinations. These faculty members would be given 5% release salary, which would equate to one FTE. However, this idea would probably not be feasible under current budget conditions.

Dr. Ted Kohers stated that having observers attend examinations is essential. He feels that the possibility of a report being submitted had an impact on examinations; therefore, everyone participating acted professionally. As a result of not having observers, material presented at defenses is incomplete and preliminary. Dr. Person stated that the Graduate Council should be concerned with this issue. Dr. Person also stated that examinations are being held without the full committee present. This may result in students stating that the meeting was unfair or inappropriate.

A question was raised as to the number of complaints from graduate students since the process of having observers ended. Dr. Boyle expressed his regrets that there is no hard data available, only anecdotal information. In the past, the observer informed the Dean of the Graduate School of any unprofessional or discriminatory incidents. Dr. Robert Jenkins stated that he attended examinations because he wanted to do his part. Dr. Boyle stated that is the reason the Graduate Council has argued for recognition for faculty who participate. Dr. Ted Kohers suggested that faculty who attend examinations as Graduate Faculty representatives could receive measurable credit for either service or teaching that could be used in their annual evaluations. Dr. Greg Dunaway stated that because there is this much concern it must have been a logistical nightmare to assign representatives and that it could likely become one again. Dr. Dunaway stated that he had participated in examinations in which the attending observer did not possess any expertise in the student's area. He stated that if the observers took the meeting seriously, they tended to assume the role of student protector rather than the protector of the standards of the department. Other observers were reluctant to attend and wanted to get the meeting over quickly. Dr. Dunaway was not confident that the process would work in the way the Council wants it to work and that this was probably not the mechanism to address quality of examinations. Dr. Boyle stated that he thinks it is more important to protect the student in these defenses and that is why he is in favor of representation. The student would have someone who could report to an investigative committee that an examination was conducted correctly or that there were irregularities.

Dr. Dwight Hare asked if there are sufficient complaints to warrant having observers. Dr. Person stated that he has not had any significant number of complaints. Dr. Rent stated that

complaints might be directed to the deans. Dr. Person stated that students are reluctant to complain in these situations, because they feel they will become involved in unpleasant situations with the faculty. Dr. Jenkins wanted to know who launches corrective action when an observer reports an improper situation, and is it only students who fail who complain? Dr. Boyle stated that in the past the observer would submit a letter to the Dean of the Graduate School or Vice President for Graduate Studies and Research who would investigate the charges and, if warranted, see that another examination was held.

Dr. Kohers stated that the observer who attends examinations should be from a related field. Ms. Welch stated that the idea was to locate an observer from a related field. However, this was not always possible. Observers were not to be chosen from departments that had a faculty member on the student's committee.

Dr. Rent remembered a problem involving a student who was having a personality conflict with the major professor, but the student was too close to completion to switch advisors. The student made a specific request for an outside observer to attend the dissertation defense in order for the environment to be less hostile and more objective. Dr. Rent further stated that anyone could ask for the same thing. He also stated that for the most part people are very professional, and it is only in a few cases that problems arise. Dr. Boyle suggested that the Council members think about this issue so that a decision can be made at the next meeting.

7. Dean Frances Coleman introduced Ms. Eula Betts, Associate Dean of the library. Mrs. Coleman stated that the library staff has been working on implementing electronic submission of theses and dissertations. Ms. Coleman stated that the electronic process is being modeled after the process used at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University. Ms. Betts stated that because theses and dissertations will be submitted online it is not recommended to have signatures appear on the approval pages. Mrs. Betts proposed to keep the original approval page on file, at the library, and online post only a listing of the names of those approving the dissertation/thesis along with the copyright information. A sample page was distributed for the Council's consideration. A lengthy discussion followed concerning signature security, format compliance, and hard copy availability. A major point of concern was the issue of other signatures being included in the dissertation/thesis such as approval to use research instruments. It was the consensus of the Council to have the existing form without actual signatures in the online document. Dean Coleman suggested that a time be scheduled for the Council to meet at the Library for a demonstration.
8. Dr. Boyle stated that there is an existing AOP on certificate programs and it states that a certificate of recognition will be awarded only when the student has completed a planned program of 12 credit hours or more outside the student's major. Dr. Boyle found information on three graduate certificate programs: materials, software engineering, and gerontology. The materials program does not follow the AOP. Dr. Boyle asked if the current AOP should be modified to reflect reality, or should the materials program be told that it cannot do what it is doing. Dr. Boyle asked if there should be any admission requirements to certificate programs and pointed out that there are hybrid programs that combine undergraduates with graduates. He also asked about standards for awarding certificates.

Dr. Boyle proposed that there be no admission requirements except the consent of a participating department. Hybrid programs should be allowed as long as prerequisites are followed and a “B” average should be required for successful completion of the program. Dr. Rent disagreed with the proposed requirement of a “B” average because someone will have to monitor that. Dr. Rent proposed that each certificate program state its specific grade requirements. Dr. Person stated that he can see Dr. Boyle’s concern for trying to keep the grade requirements up because students in graduate certificate programs sit in the same classes as traditional graduate students.

Dr. Rent stated that most graduate certificate programs are within a specific area and are increasingly a post-undergraduate, professionalization sequence of courses within a specific discipline. It would be defeating the purpose to require courses outside the student’s major.

Dr. Boyle pointed out that the Graduate Council can only deal with graduate certification programs, but the University may want to take up AOPs relating to undergraduate programs.

Dr. Boyle stated that he will bring this issue up at the next meeting.

9. Mrs. Diane Wolfe distributed copies of a report generated from MSU’s application site through Peterson’s Grad Advantage indicating international interest is as follows: 362 applications in progress (applicants have looked at the application but left no information), 246 applications based on name and address only, 19 applications actually completed and submitted. The domestic application rate is as follows: 319 applications in progress (applicants have looked at the application but left no information), 128 applications in progress based on name and address submission only, 10 applications actually completed and submitted. Ms. Wolfe stated that Grad Advantage is an excellent recruitment tool; however, the academic departments have not been using it. Dr. Rent suggested that the instructions for using Grad Advantage be sent to the graduate coordinators along with a reminder of the recruitment possibilities. Ms. Wolfe also stated that GMAT, GRE, and TOEFL scores were supposed to be available instantaneously, but only one of the 19 submitted applications included a GMAT score. Ms. Wolfe verified that all 19 applicants have paid the application fee.
10. Dr. Boyle adjourned the meeting at 3:00 p.m.