I. The meeting was called to order at 2:04 pm by Dean Zawia.

II. The Minutes of Meeting No. 455 were approved.

III. Announcements

A. Associate Dean Killingbeck introduced Dr. John Stevenson as the new Graduate School Coordinator of Graduate Assessment and Learning Outcomes and thanked him for his willingness to involve himself as such. Dr. Stevenson spoke briefly, explaining his background and his ideas moving forward with this project. He expressed his enthusiasm for this new task and his excitement towards working with the members of the Graduate Program Assessment Committee. Dean Zawia thanked him for the work that he will be doing with the Council, and potentially at the Graduate Retreat, noting its tremendous importance in improving graduate education.

B. Associate Dean Killingbeck recognized a recent appointment to the Graduate Faculty. He also reviewed the process for attaining Graduate Faculty Status (GFS). Dean Zawia mentioned that the Council may want to consider looking into the standards and rules governing GFS to ensure that our students are getting the most highly qualified faculty to work with.

Kate Moran, Adjunct Professor, Department of Oceanography

C. Associate Dean Killingbeck announced that the newest evolution of the Graduate School Manual is ready to be sent out this week. He effusively thanked all of those who worked tirelessly on this endeavor. He reminded everyone that any changes that need to be made, moving forward, should be brought up in Council meetings. Dean Zawia asked everyone to be sure that they are very familiar with the current version of the Graduate School Manual. The policy was reviewed regarding which rules and procedures students are required to follow, based on when they entered their program. The expectation is that the Manual be considered a “living” document that evolves over time, with students being roughly bound to the current version.
Associate Dean Killingbeck and Dean Zawia remarked, however, that accommodations (conforming to the edition available upon student program entry) would be made for students who would have difficulty conforming to the current evolution of the Manual.

IV. Committees

A. The 2011 Graduate Council Nominating Committee Report was reviewed orally by Associate Dean Killingbeck. The duties required of members on each committee were discussed as was the selection process. Student members were only asked to sit on one committee whereas most faculty members were asked to sit on two. Those members on the Curriculum Committee were only assigned to that one committee, except Gary Stoner who was beseeched to sit on two. A vote was posed on the seconded motion brought forth by the Nominating Committee to accept the report; it was unanimously approved.

V. Policies and Procedures

A. Dean Zawia spoke to an issue brought forward regarding co-advising/co-chairing, with two major professors. Currently there is no procedure for this at the Graduate School in terms of paperwork and rules governing, to name a few things, conflict negotiation and delineation of powers. Arijit Bose briefly outlined the need for such a process given the interdisciplinary nature of research on campus as well as the dictates of co-authored, collaborative grants and the mentoring of students supported by such grants. He asserted that students benefit from the experience of dual advisors on many levels and noted that he knew of no other University that did not have this policy. He also mentioned that it is only fair to allow both faculty involved with a grant to advise the student involved. Dean Zawia expressed concern over the effect such co-advising would have on core committee dynamics, especially voting rights, and concern over other conflicts that may arise. Many members noted that co-advising or collaborative advising does happen at URI but that there is no procedure for it. Student members noted that this could be a positive experience for students, virtually ensuring that the student will have a more rounded experience as well as having at least one advisor “on their side”. Some concern was raised by student members regarding comprehensive exam questions and whether more questions than normal would have to be answered if there were co-major advisors. Most members agreed that if this avenue was pursued, specific guidelines and rules would need to be firmly established. Associate Dean Killingbeck stated that he could see the positives for the faculty involved but not for the student. Other members noted concern about the nature of the co-advising relationship. After extended discussion the issue was tabled until such time as more thought can be given to the issue.

B. Associate Dean Killingbeck addressed the issue of allowing Adjunct Professors to serve as major advisors; both positives and negatives were discussed. Whereas there are benefits to students including major specific knowledge and flexibility for students, there are some serious drawbacks as well. Some drawbacks include the lack of accountability and understanding of policy and rules that can come with faculty advisement by professors outside of the URI community. Some members discussed the previously mention idea of co-
advising, with one member of the “team” being a tenured or tenure track professor at URI, to nullify the drawbacks. After much discussion of the pros and cons, a motion was made and seconded to approve the following statement

Adjunct Faculty will not be able to serve as Major Professors on thesis or dissertation committees.

A vote was taken with the results being 6 ‘yes’ votes, 6 ‘no’ votes and one abstention. The motion failed. This issue ended up being closely tied into the previously discussed issue of co-advising and was tabled pending further review and discussion of both issues.

C. Associate Dean Killingbeck gave a brief recount of a specific student issue involving the lack of definition in the language governing the level of coursework required of graduate students to maintain “continuous enrollment”. Due to time constraints the matter was tabled and will be reviewed at a future meeting.

VI. New Business – Due to time constraints, none were addressed

VII. Old Business – Due to time constraints, none were addressed

VIII. Meeting adjourned at 4:08 pm