

Bill # 69-13

The Graduate and Professional Student Association (GPSA) The Pennsylvania State University



of the 69th Assembly
October 30, 2019

Be it decided by the Assembly of Elected Delegates,

Town Hall **Forum to Gather Feedback from Graduate and Professional Students** (Decided: [Y / N / A])

1 **Nature of the Situation:**

2
3 To fulfill its mission, GPSA depends on open dialogue with the constituents they represent. In the
4 past, social events have been hosted or cosponsored by GPSA that allow delegates to casually
5 interact with constituents. However, there has been a lack of programs that allow constituents to
6 have an opportunity to directly interact with the GPSA delegates and Executive Board. Graduate
7 and professional students do not frequently attend Open Student Forum during assembly meetings,
8 so GPSA must provide other types of forums to collect feedback and hear challenges facing
9 graduate and professional students. Therefore, GPSA should hold a town hall where graduate and
10 professional students can meet their delegates and Executive Board members and express their
11 desires for the types of activities and advocacy work that they would like to see come from GPSA.
12 Furthermore, this bill will allow graduate and professional students an opportunity to socialize
13 over free food in the HUB.

14
15 **Recommended Course of Action:**

16
17 The Graduate and Professional Student Association authorizes the Programming Committee or
18 Executive Board to purchase the following items for the Town Hall event. The proposed date for the
19 event is Monday December 9, 2019 from 6pm to 8pm in Room 129ABC in the HUB-Robeson Center,
20 with 30 minutes for setup and 30 minutes for cleanup (3 hours total). All GPSA delegates and

1 Executive Board members are encouraged to be present in order to demonstrate GPSA's desire to
2 interact with its constituents.

3
4 Dinner: Chipotle catering the double option: (\$10.5 per person X 100 people) = \$1,050

5 including:

6 - Bases

7 o Black Beans

8 o Cilantro-Lime Brown Rice

9 - Topping/Veggies

10 o Taco Lettuce

11 o Fajita Veggies

12 o Sour Cream

13 - Proteins

14 o Chicken

15 o Guacamole (vegan)

16 - Salsas

17 o Fresh Tomato Salsa

18 o Roasted Chili-Corn Salsa

19 - Premium Topping

20 o Genuine Queso

21 - Tortillas

22 o Crispy Corn Taco Shells

23 - Chips, spoons, tongs, bowls and napkins are included

24

25 10% for delivery= \$105

26 15% tip= \$158

27

28 Room Reservation (HUB 129 ABC, 3 hours at \$50/hour) = \$150

29

30 **Total: \$1,463**

31

32 Respectfully submitted,

33

34 **Claire Kelling**

35 President, GPSA

36

37 **Arghajeet Saha**

38 Graduate Council Student Caucus Member

39

40 **Terry Torres Cruz**

41 Delegate, College of Agricultural Sciences

President _____

Affirm

Veto

Resolution #69-04

**The Graduate and Professional Student Association (GPSA)
The Pennsylvania State University**



of the 69th Assembly
October 30, 2019

Be it decided by the Assembly of Elected Delegates,

Statement on the GRE Requirement

**In support of abolishing the GRE as a requirement for admittance to the Graduate School,
selecting University Graduate Fellows (UGFs), and Administering Financial Aid**

(Decided: [Y / N / A])

1 **Nature of the Situation:**

2

3 *Summary statement*

4

5 The Graduate and Professional Student Association supports the removal of GRE (Graduate
6 Record Examination) scores in the admissions process, selection of university graduate fellows,
7 and the administering of financial aid across all colleges and departments. The GRE has been
8 shown to be prohibitively expensive and inherently discriminatory towards underrepresented
9 groups. Additionally, departments at Penn State and other top-ranked universities are moving
10 towards the elimination of the GRE as an admissions requirement. At Penn State, GRE
11 requirements are not uniform across the university, and colleges and departments are given
12 discretion in determining whether to require GRE scores in the admissions, fellowships, and
13 financial aid processes. This patchwork system is particularly unfair because the decision making
14 processes for university fellowships and financial aid depend on GRE scores as a determinant for
15 funding, a requirement dropped by the National Science Foundation's Graduate Research
16 Fellowship Program (GRFP) in 2010 and by the National Institute of Health's individual
17 fellowships and institutional training grants in 2015. Given this precedent and the move being

1 made by other universities away from the GRE, we urge the Graduate School to forgo the use of
2 this test and find more appropriate, alternative methods of assessment.

3
4 *GRE as a prohibitive expense lacking in equal accessibility to students*

5
6 The GRE is prohibitively expensive for some students and thus discourages applicants from
7 applying to certain schools that require GRE scores for admittance or financial aid. As of July
8 2019, the GRE General Test costs \$205 to take in the United States. This cost does not include
9 additional expenses that can be accrued while preparing for the GRE, such as a rescheduling fee
10 (\$50), a fee for changing the testing center (\$50), costs for study materials, or costs for travel to
11 the exam location. Additional costs can be accrued with sending GRE scores to the universities
12 that a student is applying to, which costs \$27 per school after the first four free recipients. The
13 average student, according to Career Services at the University of California - Santa Barbara,
14 applies to three to eight programs, making the cost of taking the GRE and sending out scores
15 prohibitive for many potential students (“About US,” N.D.). The costs associated with the GRE
16 may be especially burdensome to students who are already disadvantaged and underrepresented in
17 higher education, such as first-generation college students and students of color.

18
19 The problems with the cost of the GRE become even greater when we consider students who live
20 outside the United States. For individuals outside of the United States, it can cost up to \$255 to
21 take the GRE (“GRE General Test Fees,” N.D.). In addition to being costly, oftentimes the GRE
22 is offered in limited locations, meaning that some people must travel long distances, sometimes to
23 another country, to take the exam. This creates an additional burden to potential students, as these
24 individuals must pay for travel and lodging in addition to the cost of the exam. This obstacle with
25 the GRE should be of particular concern to Penn State because, according to its own statistics,
26 international graduate students make up 22 percent of the graduate student population on campus
27 as of Fall 2018 (“Statistics on Graduate Study at Penn State,” Fall 2018) and the rate of enrollment
28 by international graduate students is decreasing. Many international students incur additional costs
29 related to graduate school, such as taking the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL)
30 exam, which can cost over \$200 (“TOEFL IBT Test Fees,” N.D.), as well as expenses associated
31 with their arrival at Penn State. Given that taking this exam places unnecessary financial burdens
32 on both domestic and international students, eliminating the GRE requirement at Penn State would
33 have a positive effect by increasing the number of underrepresented groups who apply to and
34 accept offers from the university.

35
36 *GRE is not a predictor of success in graduate school*

37
38 Beyond the issue of cost, there is no clear or consistent evidence that GRE scores predict graduate
39 student success. For example, a study of graduate student success in a top-ranked psychology
40 graduate program, found that other measures of success, including “professors’ ratings of students’
41 analytical, creative, practical, research, and teaching abilities,” were far more predictive of success
42 than GRE scores (Sternberg & Williams, 1997). Another study investigating the effectiveness of
43 typical admissions criteria in identifying students’ ability to complete a doctorate in physics found
44 that GRE scores are a better predictor of the gender and race of students accepted into programs
45 than of Ph.D. completion, grants secured, the number of conference presentations, or publications
46 (Miller et al., 2019). These studies are among a mounting body of research showing little

1 correlation between GRE scores and success in graduate school. This growing evidence has
2 resulted in the recent “GRExit” by a growing number of top-ranked U.S. research universities
3 (Langin, 2019), a movement that we strongly urge Penn State to consider at the institutional level.
4 Furthermore, we consider that GRE scores cannot predict a key part of graduate school success;
5 completing a Master’s or Ph.D. program requires individual characteristics such as determination,
6 perseverance, and creativity that are not captured well through GRE scores. For this reason,
7 admissions requirements for graduate school programs and fellowships commonly require a
8 holistic review of application materials, including undergraduate GPA, letter(s) of
9 recommendation, a curriculum vitae, and statement(s) of purpose. Together, these measures of an
10 applicant’s character, drive, and ability are not only more meaningful predictors of graduate
11 success but are more financially accessible to individuals underrepresented across higher education
12 (Posselt 2016; Kuncel & Hezlett, 2007).

13
14 *The GRE disadvantages underrepresented communities*

15
16 “Only by attending to structural issues present in the process of selecting who gets to do the science
17 of the future can we make sustainable progress toward broadening the participation of groups
18 historically underrepresented in STEM” (Miller et al., 2019). Though this quotation is referencing
19 physics and other STEM students, the sentiment can be applied to other fields with respect to
20 graduate school.

21
22 Kimberlé Crenshaw, Professor of Law at Columbia University, provides us with the concept of
23 intersectionality, a useful legal theory that highlights the blind spots of policy and law that focus
24 on single elements of individuals’ identities (1990). Thus, rather than compartmentalizing single
25 identities, we must consider how combinations of different identities factor into students’
26 experiences of graduate school, including their socioeconomic status, gender, race, ethnicity, and
27 national origin. However, we recognize that the affected groups of students extend further to
28 include older or non-traditional students and students with disabilities, among others.

29
30 Low socioeconomic status, for instance, is correlated with GRE test performance, where low
31 socioeconomic status correlates to lower GRE scores. The Educational Testing Service (ETS), the
32 company that administers the GRE, states that there is a clear relationship where students whose
33 parents completed college score higher than those whose parents did not. ETS goes on to state the
34 possible reasons for this correlation: parents who completed college push their children more, have
35 higher standards of living and can afford to send their children to better schools, have their children
36 focus on school rather than the need to work, and can provide extra resources to the students
37 (“Factors that can Influence Performance,” 2008). Additionally, research has shown that when
38 students are made aware of their socioeconomic status, they perform more poorly on the GRE than
39 students who are not made aware of their socioeconomic status. This is particularly troubling since
40 ETS has requested and collected data at the time of students’ testing on parental income and
41 education, therefore making them aware of their socioeconomic status (Spencer & Castano, 2007).
42 Not all potential graduate students have access to the resources that ETS identifies as beneficial or
43 the social capital that comes with those socioeconomic advantages, necessitating the removal of
44 the GRE requirement in order to truly implement a more just admissions process.

1 The social and cultural capital that works for those with a higher socioeconomic status also creates
2 barriers for underrepresented students when it comes to accessing graduate education. Social
3 capital refers to the relationships, resources, and knowledge available to assist students and their
4 families with applying for college or graduate admission. This includes entrance exams such as
5 the GRE. Given these limitations, the lack of social capital tends to hinder underrepresented
6 students from applying and gaining entrance to graduate school. This is illustrated by ETS's own
7 data correlating low socioeconomic status and test scores.
8

9 In addition to the test's classism, the GRE functions as a barrier to women and underrepresented
10 groups applying to graduate schools. As Miller and Stassun said, "If the correlation between GRE
11 scores and gender and ethnicity is not accounted for... cut-offs adversely [affect] women and
12 minority applicants. For example, in the physical sciences, only 26% of women, compared with
13 73% of men, score above 700 on the GRE Quantitative measure. For minorities, this falls to 5.2%,
14 compared with 82% for white and Asian people" (Miller & Stassun, 2014). Cut-offs vary by
15 department and university, and are often used in the admissions process as a first step in narrowing
16 the applicant pool. Knowledge about these barriers is not new. In 1996, an article in the American
17 Physical Society concluded "The gender gap [when it comes to standardized testing] that favors
18 boys persists across all other demographic characteristics, including family income, parental
19 education, grade point average, course work, and class rank" ("Fighting the Gender Gap, 1996).
20 The GRE as a standardized test is no different; gender and racial identities and their intersections
21 with other identity markers, such as class, should no longer be ignored. Research over the last 20
22 years has consistently shown that GRE scores underpredict the success of women and
23 underrepresented groups (Clayton, 2016). As even ETS reports, African Americans and Hispanics
24 score on average 200 points below their white counterparts (Miller, 2014).
25

26 The institutional disenfranchisement of racialized underrepresented groups spans across academic
27 spaces and has gone on since the beginning of the United States' educational establishment.
28 Standardized test scores, including but not limited to the GRE, provide direct evidence of the
29 institutionalized racism found in our higher education system, with underrepresented students
30 performing poorly due to access and quality of education which are dictated by resource allocation
31 and controlled by the elite (Noguera, 2017). Eliminating the GRE requirement entirely will help
32 foster diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts. Penn State has the opportunity to set an example and
33 become an institution that truly fosters and serves its diverse community; one that will afford all
34 prospective graduate students the same equal opportunity for admission regardless of past
35 systematic educational inequities.
36

37 *Precedent for removing the GRE as a Graduate School admissions requirement*

38

39 Penn State would not be alone in instituting a "GRExit." A number of comparable and aspirant
40 institutions have already recognized that the GRE is a flawed predictor of graduate student success
41 and have removed the exam as an admissions requirement from numerous graduate departments
42 across the country, including at elite institutions and for almost 50 percent of life sciences
43 departments (Langin, 2019). Earlier this year, Cornell and Harvard stopped requiring the test for
44 admission into their English Ph.D. programs (Jaschik, 2019) and within the past month, Princeton
45 University (Aronson, 2019) and Brown University ("Brown Eliminates GRE," 2019) have ceased
46 requiring the exam for 14 and 24 doctoral programs, respectively.

1
2 Some schools have decided to make the GRE and other standardized tests optional for admission
3 (ex. NYU and Ohio State University, see *Benchmarking Appendix*). However, this does not make
4 the admissions process accessible for underrepresented students in terms of recruitment. Students
5 may see the “option” of sending GRE scores as not an option at all and may feel their application
6 will be incomplete without the test scores, regardless of whether they are used in the admissions
7 process by entrance committees. Those that do submit scores are likely to have higher ones,
8 creating a misleading hierarchy using a metric that is a weak predictor of success (Clayton, 2016).

9
10 Even at our own institution, a number of departments have moved away from requiring the GRE
11 for admissions entirely, including Philosophy and Anthropology. While others, such as the Physics
12 Department, have made the GRE optional. However, even if a department does not require the
13 GRE for admittance, departments like Agricultural and Biological Engineering use the GRE as a
14 factor to determine financial assistance (“Admission Requirements,” N.D.). Additionally,
15 university fellowships like the Bunton Waller (“Bunton-Waller-Nomination Form,” N.D.) and the
16 College of Education (“University Graduate Fellowship Program Nomination Form,” N.D.)
17 require the GRE to be submitted as part of an application. This further disenfranchises
18 underrepresented groups, even after being admitted to Penn State.

19
20 Penn State is already beginning to distance itself from the GRE. Removing the GRE test as an
21 admission and/or fellowship requirement for all graduate programs at the university is the logical
22 next step. Not only would such a move demonstrate the university’s commitment to genuinely
23 fostering a diverse, equitable, and inclusive graduate population (part of the Strategic Plan 2016-
24 2020), but it would also provide consistency across departments. While individual departments
25 removing the GRE requirement is a step in the right direction, there will not be genuine change
26 until the requirement is eliminated from all departments for both admission and fellowship
27 consideration. By taking this step, Penn State can move toward fulfilling its mission and join other
28 prestigious institutions that are working to make graduate school more equitable and accessible to
29 all.

30 **Recommended Course of Action:**

31
32
33 We consider that including the GRE as a requirement for admissions goes against the diversity
34 statement of the Graduate School. The Graduate School defines diversity as “a climate which
35 encourages **representation of faculty, staff, and students from typically underrepresented**
36 **entities, including those from racial/ethnic minority groups, various countries and cultures,**
37 **genders, persons with disabilities, and those from a mixture of religions and sexual**
38 **orientations**” (“Diversity in the Graduate School”, N.D.). By including the GRE as a requirement
39 in some departments and for university fellowships and financial aid, the Graduate School is
40 inherently selecting out quality applicants and is, therefore, undercutting its own diversity
41 statement and efforts to promote equity, diversity, and inclusion across the university.

42
43 By adopting this resolution, GPSA formally recommends that the Graduate School adopt the
44 following or comparable policy changes:

- 45 1. Standardize department admissions criteria by abolishing the GRE as a required or
46 optional factor for admittance across *all* colleges and departments.

- 1 2. Abolish the use of GRE scores and utilize other criteria, such as *curriculum vitae* and
2 personal essays, as factors in selecting university fellowships.
3 3. Abolish the use of GRE scores and utilize other criteria, such as *curriculum vitae* and
4 personal essays, as factors in determining financial assistance.

5 By following these recommendations, the Graduate School can ensure a more equitable and
6 accessible admissions process aimed at enhancing the diversity of the Penn State Graduate School.
7

8 Respectfully submitted,

Amanda Burton

Delegate, College of Agricultural Sciences

Santina Cruz

Delegate, Eberly College of Science

Litzy Galarza

Delegate, Donald P. Bellisario College of Communications

Adilson E. González Morales

At-Large Delegate

Diego Hernandez

Delegate, College of Liberal Arts

Chloe McGuire

Delegate, College of Liberal Arts

Catherine Okafor

Graduate Council Student Caucus Member

Katie Warczak

Graduate Council Student Caucus Member

President _____

Affirm

Veto

The Graduate and Professional Student Association

Benchmarking Appendix of Selected Schools/Programs

School	Department or Program	Reason for not using GRE (if given)
Ivy League Schools		
Brown University ¹	American Studies Biotechnology Biomedical Engineering Chemistry Comparative Literature Computational Biology Computer Science Earth, Environmental and Planetary Sciences Ecology and Evolutionary Biology English French Studies German Studies Hispanic Studies Italian Studies Mathematics Modern Culture and Media Molecular Biology, Cell Biology, and Biochemistry Molecular Pharmacology and Physiology Neuroscience Pathobiology Portuguese and Brazilian Studies Religious Studies Slavic Studies Theatre and Performance Studies	“In enabling Ph.D. program leaders to drop the requirement to submit test scores, the Graduate School looks to attract talented, high-achieving students from an increasingly diverse pool of candidates.”

<p>Columbia University</p>	<p>Architecture² Graduate School of Arts & Sciences³ •Biochemistry, Molecular Biophysics & Structural •Biology •Cell Biology & Stem Cell Sciences •Cellular and Molecular Physiology & Biophysics •Genetics & Development •Microbiology & Immunology •Neurobiology & Behavior •Nutritional & Metabolic Biology •Pathobiology & Mechanisms of Disease •Systems Biology Ecology, Evolution, and Environmental Biology⁴ History⁵ Latin American & Iberian Cultures⁶ School of Journalism⁷</p>	
<p>Cornell University</p>	<p>English⁸</p>	<p>“GRE scores are not good predictors of success or failure in a Ph.D. program in English, and the uncertain predictive value of the GRE exam is far outweighed by the toll it takes on student diversity.”</p>
<p>Dartmouth College</p>	<p>Psychological and Brain Sciences⁹</p>	
<p>Harvard University</p>	<p>English¹⁰</p>	
<p>Princeton University¹¹</p>	<p>Art and Archaeology Classics Comparative Literature Ecology and Evolutionary Biology English French and Italian Geosciences Molecular Biology Music Composition Neuroscience Psychology Religion Slavic Languages and Literatures Spanish and Portuguese</p>	<p>“Renita Miller, associate dean for access, diversity, and inclusion for the Graduate School, said Princeton wants to make it easier for students from all backgrounds to apply for graduate study.” ‘We believe that demographic and intellectual diversity drives innovative research and discovery, it expands our capacity for teaching and learning, and it equips us for lives of leadership in an increasingly pluralistic society,’ Miller said. “To achieve our academic mission requires Princeton to identify, attract</p>

		and develop the most promising individuals from as many segments of society as possible.””
University of Pennsylvania	Immunology ¹² Philosophy ¹³	GRE scores are not required and will not be considered even if they are sent.
Yale University	History ¹⁴	Cost: “Disadvantage low-income applicants, women, and people of color” Restrict access to graduate study Distorts the admissions process
Other Academic Institutions		
Michigan State University	Education ¹⁵	
MIT	Electrical Engineering and Computer Science ¹⁶ Linguistic ¹⁷ Media Arts & Science ¹⁸	Not required
NYU	Business ¹⁹ Social Work ²⁰ Clinical Nutrition ²¹ Food and Nutrition ²² Engineering ²³ •Integrated Digital Media	Optional or not-required
Ohio State University	The Graduate School ²⁴	Section 2.1 of the Graduate School Handbook: “GRE and GMAT are optional and are not required for admission to the Graduate School.” Individual departments may still require such tests.
Purdue	Computer Science ²⁵ Educational Studies (not Ph.D.) ²⁶ Chemistry ²⁷ Biological Sciences ²⁸	

Rutgers	Molecular Biosciences ²⁹ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Biochemistry •Cell and Developmental Biology •Cellular and Molecular Pharmacology •Microbiology and Molecular Genetics •Physiology and Integrative Biology Neurosciences ³⁰	
Stanford University ³¹	Anthropology ³² Education ³³	April 2018 – Faculty senate at Stanford revised admission policy to decentralize the decision on whether to require GRE scores. “Deans will be able to either establish a blanket policy for their respective schools or allow individual departments and programs within their schools to decide whether to require the GRE General Test”
University of Chicago	Biological Sciences ³⁴	Encourage female and minority applicants
University of Illinois	Computer Science ³⁵	
University of Indiana	Biology ³⁶ Kelley School of Business ³⁷	
University of Michigan	History ³⁸ Programs in Biomedical Sciences ³⁹ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Bioinformatics •Biological Chemistry •Biophysics •Cancer Biology •Cell & Developmental Biology •Cellular & Molecular Biology •Human Genetics •Immunology •Microbiology & Immunology •Molecular, Cellular & Developmental Biology •Molecular & Cellular Pathology •Molecular & Integrative Physiology •Neuroscience •Pharmacology School of Social Work ⁴⁰	

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Notes - Benchmarking

1. <https://www.brown.edu/news/2019-10-03/gre>
2. <https://gsas.columbia.edu/degree-programs/phd-programs/architecture>
3. <https://www.gsas.cuimc.columbia.edu/applying>
4. <https://gsas.columbia.edu/degree-programs/phd-programs/ecology-evolution-and-environmental-biology>
5. <https://gsas.columbia.edu/degree-programs/phd-programs/history>
6. <https://gsas.columbia.edu/degree-programs/phd-programs/latin-american-and-iberian-cultures>
7. <https://journalism.columbia.edu/deadlines-and-application-requirements>
8. <https://english.cornell.edu/english-department-faculty-resolve-remove-gre-test-requirement-graduate-admissions>
9. <https://pbs.dartmouth.edu/graduate/graduate-admissions>
10. <https://english.fas.harvard.edu/guidelines-admissions>
11. <https://www.princeton.edu/news/2019/09/17/princeton-eliminates-gre-test-requirement-14-graduate-programs>
12. <https://www.med.upenn.edu/immun/admission.html>
13. <https://philosophy.sas.upenn.edu/graduate/prospective-students>
14. <https://history.yale.edu/news/note-removing-gre-graduate-admissions>
15. <http://education.msu.edu/maed/apply/>

16. <http://www.eecs.mit.edu/academics-admissions/graduate-program/faqs#15>
17. <https://linguistics.mit.edu/graduate/admissions/application/>
18. <https://www.media.mit.edu/graduate-program/apply/>
19. <https://www.stern.nyu.edu/programs-admissions/executive-mba-nyc/admissions/faqs#5>
20. <http://socialwork.nyu.edu/admissions/msw/msw-admissions-faqs.html>
21. <https://steinhardt.nyu.edu/degree/ms-nutrition-and-dietetics-40-credit-clinical-nutrition/how-apply>
22. <https://steinhardt.nyu.edu/degree/ms-nutrition-and-dietetics-foods-and-nutrition/how-apply>
23. <https://engineering.nyu.edu/admissions/graduate/apply/requirements/gre-gmat>
24. <https://gradsch.osu.edu/handbook/2-1-admission-application>
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