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 ])

Nature of the Situation:

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

Recommended Course of Action:

The Graduate and Professional Student Association authorizes the Programming Committee or Executive Board to purchase the following items for the Town Hall event. The proposed date for the event is Monday December 9, 2019 from 6pm to 8pm in Room 129ABC in the HUB-Robeson Center, with 30 minutes for setup and 30 minutes for cleanup (3 hours total). All GPSA delegates and
Executive Board members are encouraged to be present in order to demonstrate GPSA’s desire to interact with its constituents.

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

including:
- Bases
  - Black Beans
  - Cilantro-Lime Brown Rice
- Topping/Veggies
  - Taco Lettuce
  - Fajita Veggies
  - Sour Cream
- Proteins
  - Chicken
  - Guacamole (vegan)
- Salsas
  - Fresh Tomato Salsa
  - Roasted Chili-Corn Salsa
- Premium Topping
  - Genuine Queso
- Tortillas
  - Crispy Corn Taco Shells
  - Chips, spoons, tongs, bowls and napkins are included

10% for delivery= $105
15% tip= $158

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

Total: $1,463

Respectfully submitted,

Claire Kelling
President, GPSA

Arghajeet Saha
Graduate Council Student Caucus Member

Terry Torres Cruz
Delegate, College of Agricultural Sciences
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 ])

Nature of the Situation:

Summary statement

The Graduate and Professional Student Association supports the removal of GRE (Graduate Record Examination) scores in the admissions process, selection of university graduate fellows, and the administering of financial aid across all colleges and departments. The GRE has been shown to be prohibitively expensive and inherently discriminatory towards underrepresented groups. Additionally, departments at Penn State and other top-ranked universities are moving towards the elimination of the GRE as an admissions requirement. At Penn State, GRE requirements are not uniform across the university, and colleges and departments are given discretion in determining whether to require GRE scores in the admissions, fellowships, and financial aid processes. This patchwork system is particularly unfair because the decision making processes for university fellowships and financial aid depend on GRE scores as a determinant for funding, a requirement dropped by the National Science Foundation’s Graduate Research Fellowship Program (GRFP) in 2010 and by the National Institute of Health’s individual fellowships and institutional training grants in 2015. Given this precedent and the move being
made by other universities away from the GRE, we urge the Graduate School to forgo the use of this test and find more appropriate, alternative methods of assessment.

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

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

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

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

Beyond the issue of cost, there is no clear or consistent evidence that GRE scores predict graduate student success. For example, a study of graduate student success in a top-ranked psychology graduate program, found that other measures of success, including “professors’ ratings of students’ analytical, creative, practical, research, and teaching abilities,” were far more predictive of success than GRE scores (Sternberg & Williams, 1997). Another study investigating the effectiveness of typical admissions criteria in identifying students’ ability to complete a doctorate in physics found that GRE scores are a better predictor of the gender and race of students accepted into programs than of Ph.D. completion, grants secured, the number of conference presentations, or publications (Miller et al., 2019). These studies are among a mounting body of research showing little
correlation between GRE scores and success in graduate school. This growing evidence has resulted in the recent “GRExit” by a growing number of top-ranked U.S. research universities (Langin, 2019), a movement that we strongly urge Penn State to consider at the institutional level. Furthermore, we consider that GRE scores cannot predict a key part of graduate school success; completing a Master’s or Ph.D. program requires individual characteristics such as determination, perseverance, and creativity that are not captured well through GRE scores. For this reason, admissions requirements for graduate school programs and fellowships commonly require a holistic review of application materials, including undergraduate GPA, letter(s) of recommendation, a curriculum vitae, and statement(s) of purpose. Together, these measures of an applicant’s character, drive, and ability are not only more meaningful predictors of graduate success but are more financially accessible to individuals underrepresented across higher education (Posselt 2016; Kuncel & Hezlett, 2007).

The GRE disadvantages underrepresented communities

“Only by attending to structural issues present in the process of selecting who gets to do the science of the future can we make sustainable progress toward broadening the participation of groups historically underrepresented in STEM” (Miller et al., 2019). Though this quotation is referencing physics and other STEM students, the sentiment can be applied to other fields with respect to graduate school. Kimbrelé Crenshaw, Professor of Law at Columbia University, provides us with the concept of intersectionality, a useful legal theory that highlights the blind spots of policy and law that focus on single elements of individuals’ identities (1990). Thus, rather than compartmentalizing single identities, we must consider how combinations of different identities factor into students’ experiences of graduate school, including their socioeconomic status, gender, race, ethnicity, and national origin. However, we recognize that the affected groups of students extend further to include older or non-traditional students and students with disabilities, among others.

Low socioeconomic status, for instance, is correlated with GRE test performance, where low socioeconomic status correlates to lower GRE scores. The Educational Testing Service (ETS), the company that administers the GRE, states that there is a clear relationship where students whose parents completed college score higher than those whose parents did not. ETS goes on to state the possible reasons for this correlation: parents who completed college push their children more, have higher standards of living and can afford to send their children to better schools, have their children focus on school rather than the need to work, and can provide extra resources to the students (“Factors that can Influence Performance,” 2008). Additionally, research has shown that when students are made aware of their socioeconomic status, they perform more poorly on the GRE than students who are not made aware of their socioeconomic status. This is particularly troubling since ETS has requested and collected data at the time of students’ testing on parental income and education, therefore making them aware of their socioeconomic status (Spencer & Castano, 2007). Not all potential graduate students have access to the resources that ETS identifies as beneficial or the social capital that comes with those socioeconomic advantages, necessitating the removal of the GRE requirement in order to truly implement a more just admissions process.
The social and cultural capital that works for those with a higher socioeconomic status also creates barriers for underrepresented students when it comes to accessing graduate education. Social capital refers to the relationships, resources, and knowledge available to assist students and their families with applying for college or graduate admission. This includes entrance exams such as the GRE. Given these limitations, the lack of social capital tends to hinder underrepresented students from applying and gaining entrance to graduate school. This is illustrated by ETS’s own data correlating low socioeconomic status and test scores.

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

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

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

Penn State would not be alone in instituting a “GRExit.” A number of comparable and aspirant institutions have already recognized that the GRE is a flawed predictor of graduate student success and have removed the exam as an admissions requirement from numerous graduate departments across the country, including at elite institutions and for almost 50 percent of life sciences departments (Langin, 2019). Earlier this year, Cornell and Harvard stopped requiring the test for admission into their English Ph.D. programs (Jaschik, 2019) and within the past month, Princeton University (Aronson, 2019) and Brown University (“Brown Eliminates GRE,” 2019) have ceased requiring the exam for 14 and 24 doctoral programs, respectively.
Some schools have decided to make the GRE and other standardized tests optional for admission (ex. NYU and Ohio State University, see Benchmarking Appendix). However, this does not make the admissions process accessible for underrepresented students in terms of recruitment. Students may see the “option” of sending GRE scores as not an option at all and may feel their application will be incomplete without the test scores, regardless of whether they are used in the admissions process by entrance committees. Those that do submit scores are likely to have higher ones, creating a misleading hierarchy using a metric that is a weak predictor of success (Clayton, 2016).

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

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

**Recommended Course of Action:**

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

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

1. Standardize department admissions criteria by abolishing the GRE as a required or optional factor for admittance across all colleges and departments.
2. Abolish the use of GRE scores and utilize other criteria, such as *curriculum vitae* and personal essays, as factors in selecting university fellowships.

3. Abolish the use of GRE scores and utilize other criteria, such as *curriculum vitae* and personal essays, as factors in determining financial assistance.

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

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
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Department or Program</th>
<th>Reason for not using GRE (if given)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brown University</td>
<td>American Studies&lt;br&gt;Biotechnology&lt;br&gt;Biomedical Engineering&lt;br&gt;Chemistry&lt;br&gt;Comparative Literature&lt;br&gt;Computational Biology&lt;br&gt;Computer Science&lt;br&gt;Earth, Environmental and Planetary Sciences&lt;br&gt;Ecology and Evolutionary Biology&lt;br&gt;English&lt;br&gt;French Studies&lt;br&gt;German Studies&lt;br&gt;Hispanic Studies&lt;br&gt;Italian Studies&lt;br&gt;Mathematics&lt;br&gt;Modern Culture and Media&lt;br&gt;Molecular Biology, Cell Biology, and Biochemistry&lt;br&gt;Molecular Pharmacology and Physiology&lt;br&gt;Neuroscience&lt;br&gt;Pathobiology&lt;br&gt;Portuguese and Brazilian Studies&lt;br&gt;Religious Studies&lt;br&gt;Slavic Studies&lt;br&gt;Theatre and Performance Studies</td>
<td>“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.”</td>
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Ivy League Schools
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>University</th>
<th>Departments</th>
<th>Institutions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Columbia University | Architecture 2
Graduate School of Arts & Sciences 3
• 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 Biology 4
History 5
Latin American & Iberian Cultures 6
School of Journalism 7 |                                                                              |
| Cornell University | English 8                                                                    | “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.” |
| Dartmouth College  | Psychological and Brain Sciences 9                                           |                                                                              |
| Harvard University | English 10                                                                   |                                                                              |
| Princeton University | 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 | “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 |
and develop the most promising individuals from as many segments of society as possible."

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>University of Pennsylvania</th>
<th>Immunology 12 Philosophy 13</th>
<th>GRE scores are not required and will not be considered even if they are sent.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yale University</td>
<td>History14</td>
<td>Cost: “Disadvantage low-income applicants, women, and people of color”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Restrict access to graduate study</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Distorts the admissions process</td>
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**Other Academic Institutions**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Michigan State University</th>
<th>Education15</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MIT</td>
<td>Electrical Engineering and Computer Science16 Linguistic17 Media Arts &amp; Science18</td>
<td>Not required</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NYU</td>
<td>Business19 Social Work20 Clinical Nutrition21 Food and Nutrition22 Engineering23 •Integrated Digital Media</td>
<td>Optional or not-required</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ohio State University</td>
<td>The Graduate School24</td>
<td>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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purdue</td>
<td>Computer Science25 Educational Studies (not Ph.D.)26 Chemistry27 Biological Sciences28</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


| Rutgers | Molecular Biosciences 29  
|         | • Biochemistry  
|         | • Cell and Developmental Biology  
|         | • Cellular and Molecular Pharmacology  
|         | • Microbiology and Molecular Genetics  
|         | • Physiology and Integrative Biology  
| Neosciences 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  
|         | • 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 |
References


Admission Requirements (Graduate Programs). (n.d.). Retrieved October 13, 2019, from Graduate Programs (Penn State Department of Agricultural and Biological Engineering) website: https://abe.psu.edu/graduateprograms/admissions/admission-requirements


Langin, K. (2019). A wave of graduate programs drops the GRE application requirement. Retrieved October 13, 2019, from Science | AAAS website:
University Graduate Fellowship Program Nomination Form (n.d.). College of Education. Retrieved from Penn State University Website: https://ed.psu.edu/internal/grad-recruit/ugf-nomination-form

Notes - Benchmarking
2. https://gsas.columbia.edu/degree-programs/phd-programs/architecture
5. https://gsas.columbia.edu/degree-programs/phd-programs/history
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
12. https://www.med.upenn.edu/immun/admission.html
13. https://philosophy.sas.upenn.edu/graduate/prospective-students
15. http://education.msu.edu/maed/apply/