Memorandum

To: Aaron Velasco, Chair of the Graduate Council

From: Stephen Crites, Dean of the Graduate School

Date: November 23, 2021

Subject: Expedited process to remove GRE requirement for applicants who have UTEP Undergraduate Degree

The GRE has been a core component of graduate admissions for many years but is being dropped as an admission requirement by many institutions. One reason for this is the general GRE components have low to moderate correlations with graduate GPA (approximately 0.20 - 0.40) and correlate less well with other metrics of success such as degree completion and research productivity ((Kuncel et al., 2001; Perez, 2011; Petersen et al., 2018). Furthermore, Educational Testing Services (ETS) data suggest that women and some ethnic minorities score lower on the GRE, which may lead to incorrect usage of the GRE if these potential biases are not recognized in admission decisions (Educational Testing Service, 2008). These issues, along with the cost of the GRE ($205), are leading many institutions to drop the GRE as an admissions requirement (Langin, 2019).

Removing the GRE admission requirement at UTEP is not easy because the process is long and onerous. A program must initiate a request to change the Catalog that is advanced to the College Curriculum Committee, Graduate Council, Graduate Dean, Provost, President, and finally the UT System Board of Directors. Because College committees and the Graduate Council meet once a month and the UT System Board meets only four times per year, it often takes more than a year for admission changes to be reflected in the Graduate Catalog.

The UT System recently gave UTEP permission to remove the GRE as an admissions requirement for our own students (i.e., graduates of UTEP undergraduate programs) without submitting this request to the System. The principle behind this is that faculty know their own students and this knowledge likely outweighs any benefit that the GRE might provide. Any program that wants to remove the GRE for all applicants must still go to the UT System.

In the past semester, many programs approached me about removing the GRE admission requirement based on the national trends and our recent experience in which GRE was waived for a year (due to pandemic constraints). I am requesting Graduate Council approval to create a simpler and more

expedient mechanism for programs to eliminate the GRE requirement for their own students (i.e., graduates of UTEP undergraduate programs).[1] This process would involve two things.

First, the program must advance a memo requesting that the GRE be removed that clearly defines which undergraduate major(s) are eligible and the acceptable period between the undergraduate degree and graduate degree (e.g., 5 years). The memo would go to the relevant College Committee and Dean and then to the Graduate Dean. The Gradate Dean would initiate the relevant steps to change the admission criteria for that program in the Catalog.

Second, the program must provide all students who matriculate under this provision with a student handbook prior to enrolling to help them better understand the nature of the program.[2] A central purpose of the application process is to make sure that students who enter a graduate program have the requisite training and abilities to complete the program. Research on completion suggests that the typical application materials (GRE, UG GPA, letters of recommendation) explain only a small fraction of the variance in completion (Smith et al., 2006). Whether students complete the degree depends on many factors, including program factors such as program objectives, structure, and requirements. For example, students withdraw from graduate programs because they conclude that the program's objectives will not help them toward their career goals or because they don't know or understand the program requirements. Requiring graduate program handbooks complements ongoing efforts to ensure alignment between student goals/aspirations and program objectives.

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1   Any program that wants to remove the GRE for ALL applicants must submit a full proposal that is advanced to the UT System via the standard pathway.

2   Programs are welcome and encouraged to provide a Student Handbook to all applicants. There is reason to believe that students from families that do not have backgrounds in graduate education, as is common for many UTEP students, may benefit most from early exposure to graduate expectations.

References

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