GRADUATE COUNCIL MINUTES  
February 21, 2019  
1:00 PM  
GRINTER HALL ROOM 110

MEMBERS PRESENT: Dr. Henry Frierson (Chair), Dr. Karen Bjorndal, Dr. Joyce Bono, Dr. Kendal Broad-Wright, Dr. Warren Dixon, Dr. Raymond Issa, Dr. Bruce MacFadden, Dr. James McLeskey, Dr. Sihong Song, Mr. Seth Assan (GSC rep)

MEMBERS ABSENT: Dr. Jason Blackburn, Dr. David Bloom, Dr. Wendy Graham, Dr. Lori Pennington-Gray, Mr. Glen Billesbach (GSC alternate)

GUESTS PRESENT: Ms. Suzie Burns (Office of the University Registrar), Dr. Maria Gurucharri (College of Design, Construction, and Planning), Dr. Brian Marchman (Distance and Continuing Education), Ms. Kathy Zemba (Office of the University Registrar)

STAFF PRESENT: Dr. Paul Duncan, Dr. Emilia Hodge, Mr. Matt Mitterko, Ms. Stacy Wallace

The meeting was called to order at 1:01 p.m.

ACTION ITEMS:

1. Minutes from the January 17, 2019 Graduate Council meeting. A motion to approve was made, seconded, and passed unanimously.

MAJOR:

2. Proposal from the College of Design, Construction and Planning for a modification of the curriculum for the major in Landscape Architecture for the Master of Landscape Architecture (#13329). Dr. Maria Gurucharri was present for discussion.
   GC Member: I noticed that one of the courses, LAA 6322, has 3-4 credits. Does that add to the overall required credits of the major?
   Dr. Gurucharri: No, it doesn’t. Our lecture courses are 3 credits, but we have studio courses that are 5 or 6 credits. A motion to approve was made, seconded, and passed unanimously.

POLICY:

3. GRE Policy Affirmation. Dr. Paul Duncan was present for discussion.
   GC Member: Why do we look at this policy in terms of degree? For example, we would say professional degrees do not require GRE scores because they’re terminal degrees. However, for a student pursuing a Master of Science degree, we would hope they would be interested in moving on to the PhD, which would require a certain GRE score.
   Dr. Frierson: The idea behind this policy is to give each program the option so they can make their own individual decision rather than having an umbrella rule. This has been an issue for a long time. We have been told that there was a state statute that said there had to be an entrance exam, which is not true. The purpose of this policy is for us to open it up for discussion and for us to make a decision. Several programs are interested in this change, whether they are professional programs or not.
   Dr. Duncan: This motion captured key elements of this policy change, but there is also a list of various possible implementation issues, so that is part of the attachment. If someone wants to move the motion as I composed it, or if there are concerns about it, let’s talk about them.
   A motion to formally discuss the policy was made, seconded, and passed.
GC Member: To clarify, the first paragraph of this document is the motion?
Dr. Duncan: Yes, and administrative difficulties make up the rest of the document. After this policy is approved, we will go out to the colleges and determine exactly what each college identifies as its complete list of master’s degree programs. Once we have that information, we’ll be able to work with the Registrar’s office on the admissions piece.
GC Member: Will this decision always rest with the departments or could college deans overrule it?
Dr. Duncan: This motion is for the programs. I don’t foresee that a college dean would seek the opportunity to unilaterally declare something like that.
GC Member: I believe that technically they can’t do that. Faculty can do that but not deans.
GC Member: We found in our discussions in my unit that the items included here were helpful. They didn’t get as arcane as this document, but these items were all relevant. We were able to respond to every question faculty have with these clarifying items, which was useful.
GC Member: I think item #8 of the document is important, but #9 is less clear.
Dr. Frierson: The issue that drove this policy was that GREs were a hindrance for some applicants when we compare our numbers with those of our peer institutions. If units don’t want to use the GRE for a requirement, they should hold to that.
GC Member: But if someone submits the GRE score when it’s not required, this language is not clear that they won’t be penalized or advantaged for submitted GRE; this language makes it sound like they will not be penalized or advantaged for their score.
Dr. Duncan: We don’t have control over students who sit for the GRE and provide their score. We can encourage programs to not have it both ways in that we don’t want programs to say they don’t require the GRE but give extra points for those who take it.
GC Member: I would suggest a modification to #9 to add “on the basis of whether they submitted GRE scores.” In my opinion, that would be clearer. If a student submits a GRE score, as humans it would be impossible to forget that when considering admission.
GC Member: We should be encouraging faculty to not use the scores if we’re going to be free of bias. It’s difficult but to the best of our ability, we should not use the scores if we have decided they aren’t a requirement.
Dr. Frierson: There may be a possibility to redact the GRE scores when they come in if the student is applying to a program that doesn’t require the GRE.
Dr. Duncan: I’m cautious about trying to dictate or even plan for too many scenarios. One question to consider is when we have a student who is right on the edge of admissibility, such as one with a 2.8 undergraduate GPA, the first explanation out of every department trying to admit that student is that the student had great GRE scores. They could explain the student’s low GPA and maybe the student had been out of school for a while, but their GRE scores indicate that the student shows promise. The Graduate School, in order to override the inadmissible GPA, we would demand that the programs submit an explanation as to why they want us to reject our own admission standards. One of the pieces of documentation we accept is the GRE scores. In this scenario where the program doesn’t require the GRE, and the student’s application is marginal in some other way, perhaps the unit will turn to the quality of undergraduate institution, or a wide range of other factors.
Dr. Frierson: Students may still send their scores to us if they’re favorable, and the units will have to adhere to what they have decided to do as far as the GRE requirement.
GC Member: Who will be able to view this document?
Dr. Duncan: The Graduate Council and Graduate School staff, but it will not be published anywhere.
GC Member: I would like to go back to the previous mention of being able to redact the scores.
Ms. Burns: I want to clarify that in the new system, test scores are part of the personal record, not the application record, so we don’t touch the personal record. If an applicant applies to two different programs, one of which requires the GRE and one doesn’t, I would be worried about trying to code that in our new system.
Dr. Duncan: And the units who are less likely to require GRE Scores are also less likely to improperly use voluntarily submitted GRE scores.
GC Member: Would this policy offer advantages for some MA programs over others? We have an MA program and we strive to fund our students. We are interested in this policy, but our faculty members are concerned that this will lead to a different definition of what constitutes an MA program and what deserves funding.
Dr. Frierson: There are certain programs such as Women’s Studies, and other programs such as the traditional MBA where they’re looking at rankings, and those programs would continue to require the GRE. But for a college like Engineering where they’re looking to increase the number of applicants, the GRE may not be critical. We’re not trying to force programs or encourage programs either way but rather give them the option.
Dr. Duncan: With programs that claim to be the exact equivalent program in two different modalities, in Gainesville or online, but are the exact same degree, in that scenario those two programs would be treated as one. The program would not be allowed to say the GRE is required for one delivery mode but not the other. We will visit your college and provide what we think is the list of what we believe to be your programs. If we are correct, we will then need a decision for each of these programs.

GC Member: Circling back to #9, did we decide to modify that language?

Dr. Duncan: Those items are not part of the motion, but I’m happy to modify those. But none of these 10 items will have the force of law.

GC Member: I’m fine with that. You’ve provided a good rationale for that language as it is currently.

GC Member: Our unit is trying to increase graduate enrollment. One untapped market would be for the professional master’s, and that group of students is not inclined to go sit for the GRE exam.

GC Member: We also talked about this a few months ago in our college, and there was general support because we felt that this policy would support greater diversity.

Dr. Frierson: From my standpoint, this discussion would be completely different if we were looking at the PhD. I would expect not too far in the future we will talk about the GRE regarding the PhD but not now. And it won’t be about being competitive, it would be more for looking at providing more opportunities, removing the barrier the GRE has become for several individuals and expanding the diversity of programs. With this policy for the master’s level, the concern has been that we’re losing out to our peer institutions, particularly those programs where you have those who look to pursue a master’s for advancement opportunities, it’s a totally different situation than what our doctoral students would be concerned with. We can’t deny that the business piece is one of the factors.

GC Member: What if for example our Master of Engineering program requires it, but the M.S. doesn’t but the students take the same classes?

Dr. Duncan: Degrees that have two different names like that make it easy. If the college identifies those degree as two different degrees, one could require the GRE while the other does not. Using some of the same courses toward each degree would not impact the determination that they are two separate degrees. As information, this kind of policy approval does not have a clear path in the approval system, so we’re not sure as of now who beyond the Graduate Council will approve it. I will go to the Provost and find out. I’ll be sure to report to you on all these steps.

Dr. Frierson: When I broached this topic with the academic deans most of them were excited about the option, and some wondered if discussion for the PhD would follow. But this policy only pertains to the master’s level. A motion to approve was made, seconded, and passed unanimously.

Dr. Duncan: as information, several members of Graduate Council could not be here today, but they also expressed support for this policy.

II. INFORMATION ITEM:

4. Graduate Programs – Distance or Self-Funded (No new items).

The meeting adjourned at 1:45 p.m.