**GRADUATE POLICY COMMITTEE**

**MINUTES**

**April 29, 2019**

**The following members were present:** Ulla Sypher, Co-Chair, Communication and Information; David Johnson, Co-Chair, English; Lynn Panton, Human Sciences; Ron Doel, History; Patricia Born, Business; Sudhir Aggarwal, Computer Science; David Orozco, Business; Stanley Gontarski, English; Sonja Siennick, Criminology; Evan Jones, Music.

**The following members were absent:** Jeannine Turner, Educational Psychology and Learning Systems; Victor Mesev, Geography; Jay Kesten, Law; Woody Kim, School of Hospitality; Stacey VanDyke, Nurse Anesthesia, Applied Studies; Vasubandhu Misra, Chemistry; Vanessa Dennen, Educational Psychology and Learning Systems; Tomi Gomory, Social Work; Mei Zhang, Industrial Engineering; Mai King, Nursing; Jamila Horabin, Biomedical Sciences.

**Also present:** James Beck, The Graduate School; Judy Devine, The Graduate School; Mark Riley, The Graduate School;Jennifer Buchanan, Office of Faculty Development and Advancement; Lois Hawkes, Associate Dean, College of Arts and Sciences; Kenneth Goldsby, Subcommittee Chair, Chemistry; Ellen Granger, Program Director, Science Teaching; Banyon Pelham, College of Applied Studies; Craig Standley, Associate Dean, College of Social Work.

The meeting was called to order at 3:35 P.M. by Dr. David Johnson, Co-Chair.

**Previous Meeting Minutes** –With no revisions or additions in mind, the meeting minutes from April 22, 2019 were approved.

**Program Review- Master’s in STEM Teaching (MST)**- Dr. Goldsby provided a brief overview of the subcommittee report. He highlighted the major strengths and weaknesses of the program.

It was reported that the Master’s in Science Teaching program is generally considered to be a small but healthy program with a strong curriculum and a competent and passionate faculty. The subcommittee agreed with the external reviewer in support of the program’s decision to target students interested in teaching science at the community college level, and that efforts should be continued and expanded to reach the stead-state goal of 12 students in the program at various stages of progression towards the degree. It was noted that two attempts to schedule meetings with the graduate students were made, but the committee was unable to find suitable meeting dates and time for a representative number of students. The difficulty in scheduling this meeting underscores two issues raised in this report: (1) the relatively small number of students currently in the program; and (2) the limited funding for students in the program, requiring many of them to be employed outside of campus. The first issue is not indicative of problems within the program. The external reviewer reported that the MST students were very pleased with the curriculum and faculty. With proper support, it should be possible to grow the program to the desired size.

Dr. Johnson asked if the Program Director, Dr. Ellen Granger, had any questions or concerns about the subcommittee report. Dr. Granger was very happy with the report and thanked for the subcommittee for all their hard work.

Dr. Johnson asked if Dean Huckaba had any additional comments about the subcommittee report. Dean Huckaba noted that…

Dr. Johnson asked for discussion on recommendation 1:

The Master’s in Science Teaching (MST) Program should apply for its own CIP code, separate from the CIP code for the FSU-Teach Program.

* As noted in this report, the MST Program shares the same CIP code (13.125) with the FSU-Teach program. While there is much overlap in faculty and resources, MST and FSU-Teach are different and distinct programs, and the shared CIP code has caused considerable confusion.

It was reported that the MST program shares the same CIP code (13.125) with the FSU-Teach Program. FSU-Teach is an undergraduate program jointly administered by both the College of Education and the College of Arts and Sciences. MST and FSU-Teach are separate and distinct programs, housed in different units, that share the same CIP code.

Dr. Granger explained that the MST program has recently had its name changed from Master’s in Science Teaching to Master’s in Stem Teaching because mathematics has been added to the program. Dr. Buchanan noted some oddities with the current CIP setup. She explained that it is unusual to see a a 13 CIP code outside of the College of Education and inside the College of Arts and Sciences and stated that “back in the day, it was negotiated between the two colleges to move the bachelor’s level of the CIP code under the College of Education, while the master’s level of the CIP code remained under the structure of the College of Arts and Sciences.” FSU-Teach is offered under the more generic CIP code under the College of Education, where a student could pursue more than one discipline in the bachelor’s program.

Given the information above, Dr. Johnson asked Dr. Buchanan if this recommendation is appropriate. She explained that the unit could propose a new degree program, but structurally, she was unsure is there is another CIP code that this unique kind of program would fit in.

Dr. Goldsby stressed the importance of keeping this recommendation because it has caused so much confusion. As such, Dr. Born suggested that the recommendation be kept, but slightly reworded to the following:

**The Master’s in STEM Teaching (MST) Program should explore ways to differentiate the program from FSU-Teach to reduce confusion over the program.**

* As noted in this report, the MST Program shares the same CIP code (13.125) with the FSU-Teach program. While there is much overlap in faculty and resources, MST and FSU-Teach are different and distinct programs, and the shared CIP code has caused considerable confusion.

**With no further discussion, a vote was placed. All were in favor of the recommendation.**

**PASSED**

Dr. Johnson asked for discussion on recommendation 2:

**The MST Program should meet with chairs and/or other representatives of the science departments to explore new and creative mechanisms for students in the program to simultaneously pursue a graduate science degree.**

* The MST Program wants to produce more graduates who can teach science at the community college level. This shift towards community college teacher preparation was supported by the external reviewer and by our committee. The Director of the Office of STEM Teaching Activities (Dr. Granger) plans to meet with the chairs and faculty of the various science departments to ask them to encourage their graduate students to also pursue the Master’s in Science Teaching. Most science faculty will be reluctant to let their students earn a second degree while working in their lab. We encourage the MST Program to consider this concern and work with the science departments to seek out new and creative mechanisms acceptable to both programs. One possibility would be to target graduate students who elected to complete a Masters in their field of science. More possibilities open if the MST student bring their own funding.

There was no discussion on this recommendation.

**With no further discussion, a vote was placed. All were in favor of the recommendation.**

**PASSED**

Dr. Johnson asked for discussion on recommendation 3:

**To the extent that it is consistent with the mission and priorities of the University and College, the MST Program should explore new and creative mechanisms for funding students in the MST Program.**

* Our committee knows this recommendation is a difficult one, but it would almost certainly increase the likelihood of students being able to simultaneous graduate degrees in a science department and the MST Program. One possibility might be to have MST graduate students (with the appropriate coursework) serve as instructors in the science departments, but any funding mechanisms worth exploring should come from the MST faculty as they are uniquely qualified to understand the needs of their students.

It was reported that the students are almost exclusively self-funded.

There was no discussion on this recommendation.

**With no further discussion, a vote was placed. All were in favor of the recommendation.**

**PASSED**

Dr. Johnson asked for discussion on recommendation 4:

**To the extent that it is consistent with the mission and priorities of the University and College, the MST Program should consider increasing the size of its faculty.**

* Although the MST Program administrators (Dr. Granger and Dr. Staehling) did not seem to think there was an urgent need to expend the faculty, our committee felt that increasing the number of students in the MST Program would be an excessive strain on the current faculty. Perhaps even more important, proper advising of the students might exceed the capacity of the current faculty. This concern was shared by the external advisor who stated that the current faculty-administrators would “not be a sustainable model as the program grows” and that “at a minimum the program should have dedicated administrative support in addition to the program director to assist in office work, including communication, financial management, student records, scheduling and advising.”

It was reported that five tenured or tenure-track faculty are affiliated with the FSU-Teach program, four of whom hold appointments in the College of Education; the fifth affiliated faculty member is a Professor of History in the College of Arts and Sciences. Six specialized or teaching faculty, three of whom have PhD’s (all from FSU) and three who hold MS degrees (two from FSU), hold appointments in FSU-Teach and/or the College of Arts and Sciences. The QER Self Study indicated that 10 affiliated faculty members from Arts and Sciences and Education participate in the program, typically involving a half-time commitment to teaching in the program.

The outside reviewer noted “the current staffing is sufficient to support its curricular offerings with the present size of the program. However, efforts to recruit more students into the program, if successful, would push instructional demands beyond the capacity of the current faculty.” The outsider reviewer also noted that “the program has too few affiliated tenured and tenure-track faculty…”

**With no further discussion, a vote was placed. All were in favor of the recommendation.**

**PASSED**

Dr. Johnson asked for discussion on recommendation 5:

**The MST Program should consider updating and enhancing the MST website.**

* The external reviewer gave the URL for Masters in Science Teaching website as (<https://www.bio.fsu.edu/osta/mist-cct.php>), but this link goes to a website that refers to the program as the Masters in STEM Teaching (MST) Program. Searching for “Masters in Science Teaching” using the fsu.edu search engine gave (<https://www.bio.fsu.edu/osta/masters_new.php>) which appears from the URL to be the “new” MST website; however, both the Masters in Science Teaching - Grades 6-12 Teaching and Masters in Science Teaching - Community College Teaching links on this page lead to the Masters in STEM Teaching (MST) Program website. This difference in the names of the program (“STEM” versus “Science”), while slight, is somewhat confusing. Updating and enhancing the website should also help in recruiting more students to the MST Program and help reach the target goal of having 12 students in the program at steady state. Also, moving the website to its own URL (mst.fsu.edu, for example) might give the sight a stronger presence and avoid any confusion regarding affiliation to a particular science department. The MST Program should also be listed by name on the Departments and Programs page of the College of Arts and Sciences website. Currently the Office of STEM Teaching Activities is listed under Interdisciplinary Programs. Clicking on that link leads to a page listing programs in the Office of STEM Teaching Activities that includes a link to the Masters in STEM Teaching site, not the Master’s in Science Teaching site as differentiated above.

It was reported that the unit does not appear to have an up-to-date graduate student handbook published online for students.

There was no discussion on this recommendation.

**With no further discussion, a vote was placed. All were in favor of the recommendation.**

**PASSED**

Dr. Johnson opened the floor to additional questions.

Mr. Beck asked if the MST program has a graduate student handbook that is up-to-date and published online for the graduate students. Dr. Granger was unsure.

Dr. Sypher requested that a new recommendation be added to address this. She suggested the following:

**The MST program should verify whether it has a graduate student handbook that is up-to-date and available to the students on the website and if it doesn’t, it needs to create one.**

There was no discussion on this recommendation.

**With no further discussion, a vote was placed. All were in favor of the recommendation.**

**PASSED**

Dr. Johnson asked for discussion on recommendation 7:

**The committee recommends continuation of the Master’s in STEM Teaching Program.**

There was no discussion on this recommendation.

**With no further discussion, a vote was placed. All were in favor of the recommendation.**

**PASSED**

**GRE Waiver Request- Professional Communication Program in the College of Applied Studies (PCC)**- Dr. Pelham provided a brief overview of the GRE Waiver. He explained that the Program of Professional Communication in the College of Applied Studies offers one master’s degree program: Corporate and Public Communication. He noted that the unit is requesting permission to waive the GRE admissions requirement, in limited circumstances, for select students who apply to this program. Currently, when they evaluate master’s student applications, the GRE is just one of several factors they consider in their decision making. As noted on their website, all application materials are reviewed holistically, and strong consideration is given to other components such as undergraduate major, GPA, personal statement, letters of recommendation, related field experience, writing sample, CV or resume, etc.

**Criteria**

**The Program of Professional Communication requests to offer a waiver of the graduate admissions entrance exam (GRE, GMAT, LSAT, MAT) requirement for Master's students who meet the following criteria: The Graduate Admissions Entrance Exam requirement will be waived for outstanding applicants meeting at least ONE of the following criteria:**

1. **A completed Master's, JD, MD, PhD, or other research-based Doctoral degree with a GPA of 3.0/4.0 or higher from a North American accredited institution.**
2. **Five years of professional communication-related experience and a 3.0/4.0 or higher upper‐division undergraduate GPA from a North American accredited institution.**
3. **FSU undergraduate students with an upper‐division communication GPA of 3.2 or higher and an overall GPA of 3.2 or higher in the last 60 hours.**
4. **Undergraduate students from any regionally accredited college or university with an overall GPA of 3.6/4.0 or higher.**

**Applicants must provide evidence to satisfy the criteria being applied. Note: Applicants with a competitive GRE score will still be able to apply to the program and will not be held to these additional requirements.**

Dr. Pelham explained that a growing body of research has demonstrated that the GRE may, at best, predict student success during the first semester of graduate study, but more importantly, it may limit the number of highly capable women and underrepresented racial/ethnic candidates admitted into programs. As Fedynich (2017) found in her review of research analyzing the use of the GRE as a predictor of success, “The overall consensus in the majority of the studies advised admission committees to contemplate reducing the dependence on entrance examination scores as a predictor as to how graduate students would fare in graduate school.” The GRE and other standardized tests used as admission criteria for graduate programs do not test arguably more important factors for student success, such as creative and practical ability and motivation (Fedynich, 2017), skills that can be cultivated in upper level undergraduate courses and through professional field experience. Even the “Educational Testing Service (ETS), which administers the GRE, advises restrained use of general test scores for admissions and discourages the use of a cutoff score” (Moneta-Koehler et al., 2017, p. 1).

Dr. Pelham noted that several peer or aspirational communication graduate programs either do not require the GRE at all or permit applicants to waive the GRE requirement in lieu of other criteria. These institutions include American University, Boston University, Emerson, George Washington, MIT, Syracuse University, UC Berkley, University of Colorado Denver, and University of Nebraska Omaha. Given the reputation of these institutions that already waive or do not require the GRE, the College of Applied Studies see no threat to the perceived rigor and esteem of FSU or the Program of Professional Communication should they be permitted to do the same. He stated that they also believe waiving the GRE requirement for students who meet the criteria above could give us a competitive advantage, attracting high caliber students who may not otherwise apply or even consider graduate school because of the GRE requirement.

Criteria Rationale:

1. **A completed Master's, JD, MD, PhD, or other research-based Doctoral degree with a GPA of 3.0 or higher from a North American accredited institution.**

Waiving the GRE for applicants who have already earned a professional degree will allow us to admit students who have already demonstrated their success in professional schools and are likely to continue their success in our master’s programs.

1. **Five years of professional communication-related experience and a 3.0 or higher upper‐ division undergraduate GPA from a nationally accredited institution.**

In their study of professional experience as a predictor of graduate school success, Gibson et al. (2007) found that students in a Master of Public Administration program with standardized test waivers “have slightly higher-grade point averages than their non-waiver counterparts, indicating that the absence of standardized test scores for a specified applicant profile does not compromise overall student quality. In fact, it demonstrates the need for greater flexibility in what is required in an admissions application” (p. 872). Potential students with at least five years’ experience in the field of communication, including but not limited to advertising; marketing; public relations; communication directors for private, public, public interest, or NGO organizations; journalists; digital media production; broadcasting, cable, telecommunications, film, music industries; social media analysts; etc., who meet the GPA and other admission criteria would be considered for the GRE waiver.

1. **FSU undergraduate students with an upper‐division communication GPA of 3.2 or higher and an overall GPA of 3.2 in the last 60 hours.**

As our undergraduate programs are limited access, limited enrollment, our students are expected to have and maintain a high GPA. At the same time, we know the strengths and rigor of our undergraduate programs. The average GPA of our undergraduates at time of graduation is 3.42, which is why we would argue that students with a 3.2 or higher in upper-division communication courses and overall GPA will most likely be successful in our graduate programs if they meet the other criteria in our application process. Further, the GRE waiver would let our top students know that we want them to continue their studies at FSU and that we have confidence in their ability to complete our challenging and valuable master’s program.

1. **Undergraduate students from any regionally accredited college or university with an**

**overall GPA of 3.6/4.0 or higher.**

Undergraduate programs from regionally accredited colleges or universities who have maintained a high GPA have demonstrated academic excellence, which is why we would argue that students with a 3.6 or higher in upper-division courses will most likely be successful in our graduate programs if they meet the other criteria in our application process. Further, the GRE waiver would let top students know that we want them to continue their studies at FSU and that we have confidence in their ability to complete our challenging and valuable master’s program.

Dr. Johnson opened the floor to discussion.

Dr. Gontarski commented on the GRE requirement and explained that it may be an imperfect standard, but it is at least a mechanism by which programs can uniformly gauge their students. He noted that “normally, I am not in favor of eliminating the GRE from consideration when it is normally used as a matter of convenience for a particular set of students who don’t want to take it.” Dr. Pelham understood Dr. Gontarski’s position. He agreed that standardized testing is a good accompanying measure to all the other admission standards but noted that there are many students in the professional field who meet the alternative criteria noted above that will choose another institution to complete their degree who waive the GRE.

After some further discussion, Dr. Johnson called for a motion to accept the proposal.

**With no further discussion, a vote was placed. 9 were in favor, 1 abstained.**

**PASSED**

**GRE Waiver Request- Master of Social Work Program in the College of Social Work**- Dr. Stanley provided a brief overview of the GRE Waiver. He explained that many CSWE accredited social work programs in the United States no longer require the GRE. The top five ranked (US News and World Report) programs (University of Michigan at Ann Arbor, Washington University at St. Louis, University of California at Berkeley, University of Chicago and Columbia University) stopped requiring the GRE and many other public and private programs have joined them. This has resulted in FSU becoming less attractive to qualified students. In the last two years, the College of Social Work has had at least 225 prospective students inquire about the MSW program that did not complete the application process because of the GRE requirement.

Dr. Stanley elaborated that several studies support the idea that the GRE does not have predictive value in determining student’s academic success. A student’s undergraduate degree appears to have more value in predicting the successful completion of a master’s program. He added that the College of Social Work uses other factors when reviewing admission files to predict a student’s success in the MSW program. They require an extensive statement of purpose, three professional or academic letters of reference, a resume and a discussion of pertinent work and volunteer experience. The overall average GPA for the last four semesters (2017-2018) is 3.6 for advanced standing from the BSW program and a 3.4 for the traditional students from a variety of baccalaureate degrees. The graduation rate for the past three years was 83%.

**Criteria:**

**The GRE would be retained for potential candidates with a GPA lower than 3.0.**

**The GRE requirement may be waived for outstanding applicants meeting at least ONE of the following criteria:**

1. **Five years or more of social work experience in a traditional social work agency providing direct service delivery or macro services and a 3.0 undergraduate upper division GPA (advanced standing or traditional students) from a regionally accredited institution.**
2. **A completed Master's, J.D., M.D. or Ph.D. degree with a 3.0 (or better) GPA from a regionally accredited institution.**
3. **A 3.5 or higher undergraduate GPA from a regionally accredited institution.**
4. **Any earned or anticipated baccalaureate degree from Florida State University, with a 3.25 upper division GPA at time of application.**

Dr. Johnson opened the floor to discussion.

There was limited discussion on this proposal.

**With no further discussion, a vote was placed. All were in favor of the recommendation.**

**PASSED**

**With no further business to be presented, Dr. Johnson adjourned the meeting at 5:00 P.M.**