**GRADUATE POLICY COMMITTEE**

**MINUTES**

**October 7, 2019**

**The following members were present:** David Johnson, Chair, English; Lynn Panton, Human Sciences; Sudhir Aggarwal, Computer Science; Cater Hay, Criminology; Evan Jones, Music; Steve Johnson, Law; Tomi Gomory, Social Work; Jamila Horabin, Biomedical Sciences; Vasubandhu Misra, Chemistry; Jessica Ridgway-Clinton, Jim Moran School of Entrepreneurship; Gary Burnett, School of Information; Ron Doel, History.

**The following members were absent:** Jeannine Turner, Educational Psychology and Learning Systems; Stacey VanDyke, Nurse Anesthesia, Applied Studies; Mei Zhang, Industrial Engineering; David Orozco, Business, RMI-REE; Patricia Born, Business, RMI- REE; Audrey Heffron Casserleigh, Emergency Management and Homeland Security; Stanley Gontarski, English; Mai King, Nursing; Jim Lile, Theatre; Woody Kim, School of Hospitality; Vanessa Dennen, Educational Psychology and Learning Systems.

**Also present:** Mark Riley, The Graduate School;Judy Devine, The Graduate School;Samantha Kunin, Law, Graduate Student Representative; Rachel Jones, Sport Management, Graduate Student Representative; Gregg Stanwood, Biomedical Sciences; Cathy Levenson, Biomedical Sciences; Linda Rinaman, Neurosciences (Psychology).

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

**Previous Meeting Minutes** –With no revisions or additions in mind, the meeting minutes from September 30, 2019 were approved.

**GRE Waiver Request- Biomedical Sciences-** Dr. Stanwood provided a brief overview of the GRE Waiver. He explained that the Biomedical Sciences PhD program is requesting permission to waive the GRE admission requirement for specific outstanding students who apply to this program. Applicants who meet the following academic and research background criteria will have the option to request a waiver of the FSU requirement to provide GRE scores:

***Academic Credentials:***

* *Upper-division undergraduate GPA of 3.2 (on a 4.0 scale) or higher from an accredited national or international college or university, OR*
* *Graduate GPA of 3.5 (on a 4.0 scale) or higher from an accredited national or international college or university.*

***Research Experience:***

* *Undergraduate research-based thesis in a relevant field, OR*
* *Post-graduate research experience in a relevant field. This would include both graduate school and formal post-baccalaureate programs, OR*
* *Extensive (at least 1 year) relevant research experience. This includes both paid and unpaid work, but must reflect significant engagement, commitment, and an understanding of the research process.*

Examples of relevant fields include (but are not limited to): biology, biochemistry, biomedical sciences, chemistry, genetics, engineering, medicine, neuroscience, and pharmacology/pharmaceutical sciences.

Dr. Stanwood noted that in addition to not providing predictive value in success of biomedical doctoral students, the GRE also appears to put highly capable women and underrepresented groups at a competitive disadvantage for admission to graduate training programs.

Dr. Stanwood asserted that performance on the GRE is not correlated with any metrics of success in a biology/biomedical-related research career. Metrics studies to date include likelihood of finishing the degree, passing qualifying exams, time to defense, number of conference presentations, and number of first author papers. Even the Educational Testing Service (ETS) itself, which administers the GRE, discourages the use of GRE cut off scores for admissions, and acknowledges that the GRE does not predict other skills needed to succeed in professional programs.

Dr. Johnson opened the floor to discussion.

Dr. Johnson thanked Dr. Stanwood for the well-researched proposal.

Dr. Misra asked if the admission’s committee looks at other factors aside from the GRE scores. Dr. Stanwood explained that the prospective students must present supportive evidence within their application that they meet the selected waiver criteria (e.g., authorship on a peer reviewed scientific publication, statement from a former advisor or mentor, etc.). All applicants will have the option to report their GRE test scores. Applicants should explain within the waiver request how they meet the criteria. Dr. Stanwood noted that approval of a GRE Waiver Request does not guarantee admission to the program or university. Prospective students must still submit and complete a Graduate Application and meet all university and department admissions requirements to be considered for admission. He also stated that the Biomedical Sciences PhD program considers multiple factors in a holistic review process when considering admission of applicants. These include previous research experience, letters of recommendation, statement of purpose, relevant course work, previous GPA, and sometimes the GRE. Research experience is typically the highest weighted factor in these evaluations by the faculty, and published studies affirm a fairly robust relationship between previous laboratory experience and success as a graduate student.

**With limited discussion, a vote was placed. All were in favor of the proposal.**

**PASSED**

**GRE Waiver Request- Neuroscience-** Dr. Rinaman provided a brief overview of the GRE Waiver. She explained that the interdisciplinary Program in Neuroscience, with support from both the College of Arts and Sciences and the College of Medicine, offers one doctoral degree program in Neuroscience and are requesting permission to waive the GRE admission requirement for select, outstanding students who apply to this program.

Currently, GRE scores are only one of several factors that are considered when evaluating prospective students. Other factors, which are already weighted higher than the GRE by many of the faculty in Neuroscience, include previous research experience, relevant course work, letters of recommendation, relevant employment, and upper-division GPA. The Program in Neuroscience is requesting a GRE waiver based on a growing body of research that finds only a weak correlation between the GRE and success in STEM-related fields, including Neuroscience. The program believes that waiving the GRE admission requirement will increase the pool of applicants, which in turn will help them achieve the goals of (i) admitting students who are highly likely to be successful in the doctoral program, (ii) increasing their ability to compete for the most highly qualified applicants among other Neuroscience Programs that have already waived or do not require the GRE, and (iii) increasing the number of underrepresented students in the doctoral program.

Dr. Rinaman proposed the following criteria to waive the GRE:

The GRE admission requirement will be waived for select, outstanding students who meet at least one of the key criteria for demonstrating Success and Aptitude for Research plus at least one of the key criteria demonstrating Academic Preparation. These criteria are as follows:

***Success and Aptitude for Research:***

* *Undergraduate research-based thesis in a relevant field\*.*
* *Post-graduate research experience in a relevant field\*.*
* *Extensive (at least 4 months) relevant research or laboratory experience related to the applicant’s graduate training goals.*
* *Co-authored research paper published in a peer-reviewed scientific journal.*
* *Extensive (at least 4 months) relevant employment related to the applicant’s graduate training goals.*

*\*Examples of relevant fields include, but are not limited to, neuroscience, biology, biochemistry, chemistry, genetics, psychology, engineering, computer science and/or 2 years of medical school.*

***Academic Preparation:***

* *Upper-division undergraduate GPA of 3.2 (on a 4.0 scale) or higher from any nationally or internationally accredited college or university.*
* *Graduate GPA of 3.5 (on a 4.0 scale) or higher from any nationally or internationally accredited college or university.*

Prospective students must present supportive evidence within their application that they meet the selected waiver criteria. All applicants will have the option to report their GRE test scores.

Dr. Johnson opened the floor to discussion.

Dr. Horabin asked for more information on the decrease of applications between 2018 and 2019 in the Neuroscience PhD program. Dr. Rinaman explained that the decline in applications over the past three years is unfortunate (2017 n=65, 2018 n=60, 2019 n=40), but hopefully, the waiving of the GRE requirement for qualified students will help to increase applications, enlarge the selection pool and give the program a competitive advantage to attract high-caliber students who may not otherwise apply if the GRE requirement for admission cannot be waived. She noted that this drop could be attributed to students applying to other programs that no longer have a placement exam requirement for admission.

**With limited discussion, a vote was placed. All were in favor of the proposal.**

**PASSED**

Dr. Aggarwal proposed to no longer require a meeting of the GPC to review/approve GRE/GMAT waivers unless there is something concerning or notable in the proposal after initial review. Dr. Johnson understood, but explained that not every proposal is a done deal. He noted that the past three proposals have been very well done and complied with all the guidelines that have been established, but this may not be the case with every new waiver. Dr. Panton asked if the proposals could be reviewed online, via the GPC website, and electronically voted on. Dr. Johnson agreed that this is something to consider.

Dr. Aggarwal proposed the following motion to adjust the review process for GRE/GMAT waivers:

***Requested the establishment of an electronic process for members of the GPC to review subsequent GRE/GMAT waiver requests online and electronically vote on such proposals for approval.***

***In the event that a GRE/GMAT waiver request is the only item of business on the agenda for a GPC meeting, then an electronic review/vote is permissible. If not, the GRE/GMAT waiver request will follow typical protocol and should be incorporated with other agenda items and a representative from the unit should attend the GPC meeting to present the request and answer questions from the committee.***

***For the electronic vote to be valid, the final vote will need to be unanimously approved. If it is not, then the proposal will need to come to the GPC for further discussion and review/approval.***

Similar to the joint degree proposal review process, this expedited process will consist of posting the submitted materials to the GPC’s secure electronic website where GPC members will review the materials online and be asked via email to vote. GPC members will indicate any concerns to James Beck in the Graduate School and the GPC chair(s) before the next full GPC meeting.

**With limited discussion, a vote was placed. All were in favor of the proposal.**

**PASSED**

**With no further business to be presented, Dr. Johnson adjourned the meeting at 4:10 P.M.**