Pre-Meeting Workshop
Holistic Review in Graduate Admissions

CGS Annual Meeting
Washington, D.C.
December 5, 2018
Agenda

• Introduction and context (Julia Kent)
• Predictive validity of GRE scores (Ambika Mathur)
• Discussion at tables and reporting out (all)

  BREAK

• Implementing holistic review (Carol Genetti)
• Implementing rubrics (Stanley Dunn)
• Rubric activity and reporting out (all)
• Wrap up / Q & A
Holistic Review

Giving serious consideration to all the ways an applicant might contribute to a diverse educational environment.

First-time enrollment of underrepresented minorities is growing (2015-2016)

- Hispanics/Latinos: 10.9%
- Black/African Americans: 11.8%
- Asians/Pacific Islanders: 0.2%
- American Indian/Alaska Natives: 10.9%

Source: 2017 CGS Graduate Enrollment and Degrees
Faculty saw [grades and GRE scores] as useful measures for the first cut in part because they could be used to quickly compare applicants.

--Julie Posselt (2014)
### Importance of application materials to screening, admissions, funding

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Source: 2015 CGS Graduate Student Life Cycle Survey
Reforms to graduate admission can work with the current pragmatism rather than against it by developing more efficient approaches to holistic review and strengthening incentives for diversity.

--Julie Posselt (2014)
First Principles

• Diversity is essential.
• Admissions criteria should align with mission and goals.
• To reform admissions, think beyond admissions.
Promising Practices

• Demonstrate clear commitment.
• Analyze department-specific data.
• Consider alternative funding models.
• Support admissions committees.
• Kent, J. & McCarthy, M. T. (2016). Holistic review in graduate admissions

Predictive Validity of the GRE for Graduate Student Success

Ambika Mathur, Ph.D.
Associate Provost & Dean, Graduate School
Wayne State University

Council of Graduate Schools
12/5/2018
Background

• Standardized tests are widely used to assess merit to pursue graduate study despite questions of sole reliance on scores

• Yet, basing admissions decisions on test scores results in the exclusion of capable students from graduate studies

• We need a better strategy
Discussions at Wayne State

• Anecdotes about qualified applicants with low GRE scores being denied admission and/or going on to successful careers elsewhere

• But some faculty continue to view standardized tests as the gold standard metric for graduate school readiness

• Presentation of data from other institutions is not convincing
WSU Projects

• **GRE Outcomes Project:** Do GRE scores predict meaningful graduate outcomes?

• **GRE Experiment:** To what extent do faculty rely on the GRE scores when considering applicants from under-represented groups?
GRE Outcomes Project

Do GRE scores correlate with success in graduate school?

1999-2014 alumni data
GRE scores do not correlate with TTD

A. GRE-Verbal scores

B. GRE-Quantitative scores
GRE scores do not correlate with career outcomes
GRE Experiment

• **Purpose:** To understand the extent to which GRE scores factor into admissions decisions for first-generation college students

• **Design:** Faculty were randomly assigned to rate ONE of 4 vignettes of a doctoral applicant that differed by GRE score and first-gen status

GRE Experiment

- Average GRE Scores
  - No mention of first-generation status

- Average GRE Scores
  - First-generation status mentioned

- High GRE Scores
  - First-generation status mentioned

- High GRE Scores
  - No mention of first-generation status
Conclusions from WSU Experiments

• GRE does not predict meaningful outcomes but is weighted heavily in the admissions process at WSU.

• We need a better system to evaluate applicants based on valued predictors of success to ensure an equitable and inclusive process.
Portfolio Review

• Consider a broad range of characteristics and experiences that predict success (Kent & McCarthy, 2016)

• Conversations in Graduate Council and Council of Deans, with Graduate Directors, and Provost’s Office (2016-17)

• Convened Graduate Admissions Committee (2016-17)
Portfolio Review Toolkit

• What is Portfolio Review?
• Guidance on steps to develop the process:
  – Create a plan
  – Apply and assess
  – Evaluate and revise
• Case studies of portfolio review at WSU:
  https://gradschool.wayne.edu/faculty/portfolio-review-examples
Portfolio review for doctoral admissions

Recent research on graduate student success has yielded important findings regarding graduate recruitment, admissions, retention, graduation, and job placement. In response to this research, the Graduate School convened the Graduate Admissions Committee to assist and advise in creating a “toolkit” for graduate admissions at Wayne State. The following guide is designed to support graduate programs in intentional and consistent review of applications, aligning with nationally recognized best practices.

What is portfolio review?

Portfolio review is a method of improving the graduate applicant selection process so that admissions decisions are made consistently and with attention to programmatic and strategic needs.

Portfolio review emphasizes a spectrum of candidate qualities and attributes to determine the applicants most likely to achieve graduate success.

https://gradschool.wayne.edu/faculty/portfolio-review
Incentivizing Portfolio Review

• Link Graduate School academic program review as well as funding for recruitment funds, fellowships, scholarships, and awards to development and implementation of portfolio review
Table Discussions and Reporting Out
Pre-Meeting Workshop on Holistic Admissions

CGS Annual Meeting
Washington, DC
December 5, 2018
UC Santa Barbara

Graduates

2,900

Undergraduates

22,000

Masters

19%

Bachelor's

81%

Graduate Division
A Hispanic-Serving Institution

Ethnicity of Domestic U.S. Enrollments

UNDERGRADUATE

- American Indian/Alaskan: 1%
- Black/African American: 5%
- Chicano/Latino: 29%
- Asian/Pacific Islander: 28%
- White: 36%

GRADUATE

- American Indian/Alaskan: 1%
- Black/African American: 3%
- Chicano/Latino: 13%
- Asian/Pacific Islander: 14%
- White: 64%
Holistic Review: One part of diversity work

Inclusive campus serving needs of all students

Holistic Review
Admissions and Central Fellowships

• Admissions decisions are made by faculty -- decentralized

• Each department nominates a certain number of students for a campus-wide competition for the most prestigious fellowships

• Faculty committees reads nominations and select students to be awarded fellowships
“Only students with superb GRE scores will be given a central fellowship.”
Year 1, 2: Fellowship Memo

• “Nominators should speak to:
  • Academic excellence
  • Outstanding records of accomplishment

• AND
  • Nominees’ experiences of economic or educational disadvantage
  • Engagement in research focused on problems related to individuals or groups who have experienced economic or educational disadvantage in society
  • Participation in a federal- or state-funded academic/research preparation program (such as McNair Scholars)”
• Fellowship committees instructed to use holistic review

• 3 categories: Academic record, research potential, “commitment”

• Criteria under “commitment”
  • Overcoming adversity
  • Achievements over time
  • Community service, especially related to the discipline or to professional accomplishments
  • Leadership potential
  • Special talents or skills
  • Personal and professional ethics
Year 4: Complementary Work

- Associate Dean conducted one-on-one interviews with under-represented minority students from across the campus.
- I began to see the extent of climate issues on campus.
Year 5: 2016-17 Fellowship Memo

• Provided *statistical evidence* that fellowship committees do not rely on GRE scores in selecting fellowship recipients

• Expanded criteria in discussion of holistic review on fellowship nomination memo
Academic Performance

• Publications
• Conference presentations
• Writing samples
• GPA in major
• Standardized test scores
• Overall GPA
• Evidence of improvement
Diversity Contributions

• First-generation in family to attend college
• Non-traditional background (e.g. veterans, refugees)
• Evidence of overcoming disadvantages
• Impact of background on academic achievement
• Contributes diverse viewpoints to academic discussion
• Potential for leadership in increasing equitable access
• Research and/or community engagement that informs discussions of diversity in higher education
Skills and Research Potential

- Communication skills
- Mastery of the discipline
- Analytical/critical thinking ability
- Use of literature
- Organization
- Reasoning and argumentation
- Past research experience

- Relevant work experience
- Scholarly engagement
- Fit of interests with the program
- Promise of innovative scholarship
- Technical skills
- Professional engagement
Motivation and Personal Characteristics

- Passion/enthusiasm
- Motivation
- Collegiality/professional networks
- Curiosity
- Creativity
- Independence
- Breadth of perspective

- Open-mindedness
- Resourcefulness
- Positive self-concept
- Realistic self-appraisal
- Ability to work well in teams
- Leadership and community involvement
Year 5: Complementary Programming

- Theater Delta
- Graduate Scholars Program
- Dean’s Advisory Board on Diversity
- Asked each department to identify a graduate diversity officer
Year 6: GREs removed from fellowships

- GRE scores removed from fellowship nomination packets
- Provided short rubric for fellowship committees
- Graduate Council approved
- Lots of positive feedback
Year 6: Complementary Programming

• “Diversity Matters” Series
  • Theater Delta
  • Julie Posselt / Casey Miller workshops
  • Diversity lecture by Dean Jeff Milem
  • “Diversity Champions” lunch
  • Initiated Brown-Bag Series
  • Rubrics workshop

• Year 2 of Graduate Scholars Program

• New Director of Graduate Diversity Initiatives
Year 7 (Now)

- Work with Senate to allow departments to opt out of the GRE
  - Refined criteria for fellowship committees
    - Tied to language from the UC Office of the President
Year 6: Complementary Programming

- Brown Bag continues
- Extended engagement with Julie Posselt and Casey Miller
- Initiated **2-year Strategic Planning for Graduate Diversity**
  - Suite of documents that help departments set goals and *evaluate current outreach/admissions/recruitment practices* and identify areas for improvement
  - Holistic review is central to this
Year 8: Already being planned

• Workshops by Posselt & Miller across campus
• Year 2 of strategic planning process
  • Improving climate
  • Inclusive practices for supporting a diverse graduate student body
Take-Aways

- Cultural change doesn’t happen over night
- Give yourself time
- Figure out how you can have leverage
- Identify campus partners
- Tie to the university mission
- Situate within broader work of creating inclusion
From GRE scores to Rubric

Stanley Dunn
Vice Provost and Dean, Graduate Education
Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute
December 5, 2018
• Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute was founded in 1824

• The nation’s oldest technological research university

• The university offers degrees in Engineering; the Sciences; Information Technology and Web Sciences; Architecture; Management; and the Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences.
1254 Graduate Students
61 Masters Programs
43 Ph.D. Programs
ENROLLMENT FALL 2018

- School of Engineering: 46%
- School of Science: 25%
- Lally: 16%
- HASS: 6%
- School of Architecture: 4%
- IT: 3%
• STEM dominant institution
• History of an Institute minimum with a waiver process
• Keep GRE because of US News ranking
• Some faculty ready to dispense with GRE but rely on evidence of laboratory skills
• Phase in use of personal attributes over several admissions cycles
Step 1: The ETS PPI “test”

• Assessment of personal attributes
• 5 evaluators from 3 different units
• Use was socialized at GPD meetings
• Longitudinal study – predictive of GPA and TTD
• Free for GRE registrants
• Was used until discontinued by ETS
The Personal Potential Index (PPI)

• Knowledge and Creativity
  • Has a broad perspective on the field
  • Is among the brightest persons I know
  • Produces novel ideas
  • Is intensely curious about the field

• Communication Skills
  • Speaks in a clear, organized and logical manner
  • Writes with precision and style
  • Speaks in a way that is interesting
  • Organizes writing well

• Teamwork
  • Supports the efforts of others
  • Behaves in an open and friendly manner
  • Works well in group settings
  • Gives criticism/feedback to others in a helpful way

• Resilience
  • Accepts feedback without getting defensive
  • Works well under stress
  • Can overcome challenges and setbacks
  • Works extremely hard

• Planning and Organization
  • Sets realistic goals
  • Organizes work and time effectively
  • Meets deadlines
  • Makes plans and sticks to them

• Ethics and Integrity
  • Is among the most honest persons I know
  • Maintains high ethical standards
  • Is worthy of trust from others
  • Demonstrates sincerity
Step 2: ETS permission to use PPI
- The Rensselaer Success Indicator (RSI)
- External evaluation of personal attributes
- Missing the normed database, roughly equivalent to standardized reference
- Added use of personal statement
- Faculty began requesting to use RSI instead of GRE
Step 3: Towards Rubrics

• Four overarching themes of application review
  • Academic accomplishment
  • Professional experience
  • Aspiration to drive, focus and commitment
  • Capacity to learn and improve

• Prior Academic Experience
• A Set of (Professional) Experiences
• Standardized Evaluations
Rubric Timeline

Step 3: Towards Rubrics

• Spring 2018 – First Rubric trial (ECSE)
• June 2018 – Graduate School Retreat
• September 2018 – ETS Presentation
• Fall 2018 – School of Science Develops Drafts
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<tr>
<td>Research/Scholarly/Technical Skills (Transcript; Personal Stmt; LoR)</td>
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Rubric Activity and Reporting Out