MEMORANDUM

TO: Dr. Concepción Godev, Chair, The Graduate Council
CC: Dr. Thomas Reynolds, Associate Provost and Dean of the Graduate School
FROM: Johnna Watson, Associate Dean
DATE: February 28, 2021
RE: Standardized Test Proposal

Graduate policy currently requires applicants to master’s or doctoral programs at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte to submit official standardized test scores on the GRE, MAT, GMAT, MCAT, or PAEP in support of applications for admission. But over the last decade, many programs have either eliminated the test requirement entirely or adopted conditions by which the test can be waived.

**The Graduate School proposes that the Graduate Council eliminate the standardized test requirement for applicants, beginning with the 2022 application cycle.** If approved, graduate programs may opt in to require the GRE, MAT, GMAT, MCAT, or PAEP as part of their admissions applications requirements; otherwise, a standardized test will not be required. Many leading Graduate Schools across the country are test optional, including North Carolina State University, UNC Chapel Hill, UC Davis, University of Minnesota, and the University of Missouri.

Graduate education transforms lives and strengthens universities, communities, and the world. However, “Standardized tests represent a barrier to higher education for certain populations, both for their costs and for their known disadvantages for underrepresented minorities” (Miller, C. et. al. Science Advances. 23 Jan 2019: Vol. 5, no. 1, eaat7550 DOI: 10.1126/sciadv.aat7550). Ensuring access to post-baccalaureate education by understanding, promoting, and adopting full-file review (holistic admissions) will allow faculty to identify applicant qualities that contribute to success with no single factor leading to inclusion or exclusion from consideration, and may also increase program diversity and inclusion. The 2016 Council of Graduate Schools report on holistic admissions states, “Diversity is essential to the overall success of graduate programs. All students in a program, regardless of background, benefit from taking part in a learning environment that reflects various kinds of diversity.”

In support of this change, Graduate Admissions will offer additional resources and training to graduate programs and the University community on holistic admissions, including:

• Posselt, J.R. (2016). *Inside Graduate Admissions: Merit, Diversity, and Faculty Gatekeeping*. Harvard University Press. Dr. Posselt’s book is the synthesis of firsthand observations of graduate admissions committees and interviews with faculty from 10 top-ranked doctoral programs where she ultimately challenged an over-reliance on GRE scores and GPAs.


• Grade Inflation at American Colleges and Universities at GradeInflation.com

• Gender-bias in recommendation letters demonstrated via a Gender-bias calculator at slowe.github.io/genderbias

• Publications/literature on Holistic Review and an Inclusive/Equitable Climate at https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1hfDS0r4RQuKn0IPexFDMPRB8y6C6b8xwD

• Fisk-Vanderbilt Program (Holistic Review) Toolkit and associated resource materials at fisk-vanderbilt-bridge.org

• Sample admissions evaluation rubrics which can be modified and utilized by programs not currently using a rubric

• An effort to commence immediately to review and revise if necessary both the Recommendation Form provided by references and the Statement of Purpose submitted by applicants to better evaluate whether an individual has not only the academic background and qualifications required for admission, but also the skills and experiences to complete the graduate program and have a successful career

• Ongoing workshops and resources for Graduate Program Directors on best practices for holistic review in graduate admissions

• Support for programs to link specific admissions practices to student and program outcomes (enrollment, diversity, retention and graduation).

The Graduate School is here to support efforts at the program and college levels to recruit, enroll, retain and graduate a diverse and exemplary class of graduate students who support both the teaching and research missions of the University, and we believe that embracing more holistic admissions processes will help propel us forward. Thank you in advance for your consideration of this proposal.