THE GRADUATE SCHOOL

Graduate Council Meeting
Thursday, October 20, 2022, 12:00-1:30 pm
Zoom

ATTENDEES: Steve Fetter, Evelyn Cooper, Jason Farman
Helim Aranda Espinoza, M Cecelia Bustamente, Lauren Carter Cain, Eun Kyoung Choe, Abhijit Dasgupta, Leila De Floriani, Andrew Elby, Paul Gold, Lawrence Joao, Douglas Julin, Byung-Eun Kim, Leonid Koralov, Lindsay May, Nicole Menkart, Matthew Nessan, Paulo Prochno, Yueming Qiu, Jason Rudy, Jen Schaffer, Jeff Shultz, Paul Turner, Sennur Ulukus, David Van Horn, Alexander Williams, Patrick Charles Wohlfarth, Jiannan Xu (26 voting members)

GS Staff: Robyn Kotzker, Marion D'Aurora, Fan Tsao, Brent Hernandez, Blessing Enekwe, Patricia Woodwell, Linda Macri, Spencer Benson

AGENDA
1. Welcome
2. Approve September 15, 2022, Graduate Council meeting minutes
   a. Approved
3. Updates and announcements
   a. Graduate assistant stipends.
      - The 4.5% COLA from the State has been extended to Graduate Assistants.
      - The minimum stipend is above the cost of attendance, income tax, and health insurance.
      - Mandatory Fees have decreased.
   b. Elimination of drop penalty during the first week of classes (first five days).
      - Previously, unless a student dropped and added the same number of credits on the same day, there was a 20% charge and not a complete refund.
      - Big 10 Schools allow drops with no penalties within the first week.
      - Starting in January.
      - The penalty is still in place if they drop after this first week.
   c. Permitting multiple instructors for 799/898/899.
      - Allows credits to be shared.
      - Each program will have to assign professors to students.
      - DGS/CGS will be informed of this change.
   d. A committee is needed for the Mentoring Statements to review and provide feedback.
      - Please reach out to Jason Farman (jfarman@umd.edu) if interested.
      - The workload will be around ten mentorship statements per person, only 2-3 pages each.
      - We hope to have representation from various disciplines.
      - Comments will be given to departments on December 15th.

4. Proposed policy changes for discussion
    a. Graduate admission requirements [Current Policy with new proposed language at the end of document]: provides exemption procedure for those not meeting bachelor's degree requirement
        ■ **Approved (23/23) - 1 abstain**
        ■ Context:
            1. Previously, a program requested to admit someone who did not have a bachelor's degree.
            2. Other institutions make exceptions for extensive work experience and prodigies.
            3. If this passes, programs will now submit a request to the dean of the college, who will then consult the Dean of the Graduate School.
            4. We hope to have this as a rare occurrence.
        ■ Discussion/Questions:
            1. What sort of materials would be needed to show for work experience?
                a. Letter of explanation which includes why the individual should be admitted for graduate study.
                b. Hard to specify what other materials to include since they are rare occurrences.
            2. Do we want to signal the desired scope of the blanket language on the guidance of expectations? It might be worth considering guidance that this is a rare provision.
                a. During the meeting, we added language on "exceptional cases."

    b. English proficiency testing exemption for applicants with degrees from institutions for which English is the exclusive language of instruction.
        ■ **Status: On Hold**
        ■ Context:
            1. A request from college to revisit language requirements. Currently, we require English testing for all countries where English is not the primary language.
            2. Peer institutions allow exemptions if the institution's language of instruction is English.
            3. Based on the analysis, about 4% of admitted students from these institutions were placed in bridge.
                a. A couple were placed in intensive English.
            4. It would have to apply to all programs if we moved in this direction—there were concerns by some programs, especially in the Arts and Humanities, that they have rigorous English language standards that they would like to uphold..

5. A second level of analysis was done for specific institutions, and it was difficult to identify institutions with higher rates of full admission.

- Discussion/Questions:
    1. If students are instructed in their concentration in English (such as biology or English), could this account for low TOEFL scores?
        a. We want overall English proficiency to help them as they represent themselves and navigate in the U.S.
    2. Is this separate from accent testing?
        a. This is separate from ITA, which looks at accents.
        b. Maryland language institute is the one that carries out these evaluations. They test whether undergraduates will be able to understand the teaching assistant.
        c. The Director of MEI can discuss more on this topic.
    3. The requirement for English testing is based on the language spoken in the country or region.
    4. For the low reading hypothesis, there is much more technical work at institutions abroad than in the US. To what extent were these individuals allocated to the bridge program but then done well? These students may not need to be in these courses. Hard to say.
        a. We do allow students to retake tests and place out.
        b. This number does not include students who have tested out.
    5. Has a case of a student from an English-speaking country been asked if they're comprehensive to students?
        a. No, not that they know of since they do not require screening of students from English-speaking countries.
    6. Since we're removing the GRE, is the GRE only administered in English, or are students required to take TOEFL?
        a. No graduate school requirement for GRE, determined by the program.
        b. GRE is not used for English proficiency.
    7. The Graduate School hopes to go back to peer institutions and open discussion on our data and see how their English exemption policies are working.

5. Ph.D. completion rates by race/ethnicity; discussion of possible initiatives to reduce and eliminate the completion gap
    - The undergraduate achievement gap has received important attention, and we aim to eliminate achievement gaps in the graduate rate by race and ethnicity.
    - This analysis is not done for graduate programs, specifically Ph.D.
    - Analysis:
        1. 9,000 PhD students that entered between Fall 2002 and Fall 2014.

2. Completion rates by year after entry for each racial/ethnic group (international students included as separate category) and gender
3. Controls for program, cohort, undergraduate GPA, %URM in program
4. For colleges and programs, Black, Hispanic, Pacific Islander, Native American, and multiracial students that identify as at least one of these groups are combined as underrepresented minority (URM)
5. No difference in completion rates by gender after controlling for program
6. URM PhD students have completion rates 10-15% lower than white students 6-8 years after entry.
7. International students finish faster and at higher rates than other students.
8. 10-15% lower completion rate for Black and Hispanic Students.
9. For master's degrees, international students still finish at higher rates. No significant difference between Black and Hispanic students.

   b. Discussion/Questions
- This analysis is about people who finish and the time it takes to finish, correct?
  1. This student is for all students who have matriculated and includes people who leave programs (for other opportunities).
  2. We don't have reliable central data on why people leave their programs.
- What about part-time Ph.D. students from different racial groups?
  1. Almost all Ph.D. students are full-time. There are a small number of programs that admit part-time Ph.D. students.
  2. Students admitted to candidacy are automatically enrolled in 899 and considered full-time students.
- Funding could also have an impact on completion rates.
  1. We did an analysis on funding and time to degree, but there was a relationship between students that had 4-5 years of full funding completed and at higher rates than students who were not fully funded.
- When comparing the mean white response, there was no variance presented. How significant is the variance for white graduation, and does it significantly encompass underrepresented minority students? Is it an economic or social background issue or a racial issue?
  1. Error bars include variance.
- How is a foreign student classified?
  1. Not a US student; or a student here on a visa.
- Some of the variance might be explained by students dropping out when not completing comprehensive exams, which occur at different times for programs.

- Wisconsin saw similar gaps, and in response, they created the [Graduate Research Scholar Program](#) to give additional support to underrepresented students.
    1. Almost eliminated completion rate gaps between white and underrepresented students.
- Graduate Student Comment: As a current graduate student, many Ph.D. students drop out due to a lack of peer support and a sense of community.
    1. Strong mentoring and advising are essential.
- How much can our reposnse to the data be shaped by the interpretation of the data we currelty have? Is there a way to have a proxy for family wealth? One of the reasons why people leave graduate school is because the time investment isn't worth it.
    1. More sophisticated analysis is needed to identify other factors on why students stay or leave the program.
   c. Going forward, we will investigate what peer institutions have done to eliminate the completion gap for URM doctoral students.
6. Future Discussion