

11/15/2019 GAC Minutes

Minutes of the Graduate Academic Council meeting of November 15, 2019, 9:00 AM MSC 102A.
Approved by the Council by vote of 8-0-0 on December 9, 2019.

In attendance: S. Appe, D. Card, A. Dawson, S. Faught, D. Li, O. Lunin, R. Morse, KN. Stanwicks, C. Wolff, K. Williams, J. Bartow (staff), S. Kent (staff), S. Pease (staff), C. Davis (staff), J. Deden (staff)

Guests: Daniel Mahar – Registrar’s Office

1. Substitute Chair J. Bartow asked the members if there was any other business to be added to today’s agenda.
There was none.
2. Minutes of the GAC meeting of 10/17/19 were approved with amendment by a vote of 9-0-0.
3. Dean’s Report – Dean Williams reviewed current Graduate School accomplishments.
4. Chair’s Report – None (Chair George Berg was not in attendance.)
5. Report of the GAC Committee on Curriculum & Instruction – S. Faught, Chair, reviewed the 5 proposals presented to the CC & I Committee and recommended (below) for GAC approval. The Graduate Academic Council voted to accept the Committee’s report and approve all the recommendations contained therein by a vote of 9-0-0.

Meeting adjourned without opposition at 9:30 AM

End of GAC 11/15/19 Minutes

Curriculum and Instruction Committee

November 11, 2019

Committee Members: Sydney Faught (chair), Billy Zakrzewski, Alec Dawson, Susan Appe, Dylan Card, Keith Chan, Stephen Weinberg, Christopher Wolff

Staff: Colleen Davis

Proposals reviewed: Biomedical Sciences PhD Proposal, Rockefeller College Master's Programs, Higher Education MS and International Education Management and Leadership MA Programs, Data Science MS Program, Public Health MPH Program

Biomedical Sciences PhD Program Proposal

The School of Public Health is proposing the following changes to the Biomedical Sciences PhD program:

- Increase the core from 19 credits maximum to 22 credits maximum
- Change the requirement of BMS601 (3 credits) to the following: 6 credits of Fundamental Biomedical Sciences Courses: BMS531 (3 credits), BMS555 (1 credit), BMS556 (1 credit), BMS557 (1 credit), and BMS601(3 credits)
- The purpose of the change is to allow more flexibility in the courses that satisfy the requirement for fundamental courses in biomedical sciences. Previously, all students were required to take BMS601, but now they are increasing the overall credits to 6 and adding more course options.
- This does not affect the overall credits required for the program (there are some courses that are 0 to 1 credit so there is flexibility in the individual program requirement). The overall remains at 60 credits.

Based on the department's justification above, the committee voted to approve the proposed program changes (7 approve, 0 disapprove, 0 abstain).

Rockefeller College Master's Programs Proposal

Rockefeller College has submitted 3 program proposals, requesting that the GRE be removed from the admission requirements for their Political Science MA, Public Administration MPA, and International Affairs MIA programs. Currently, the program allows for GRE waivers in the following situations:

- 5 years of professional work experience in Public Affairs (MPA and MIA)
- Completion of at least 2 quantitative courses with a grade of B or better (MPA and MIA)
- All combined undergraduate/graduate applicants are exempt from the GREs (all three programs)

The department justifies the changes based on the following:

- Extensive analysis of the applicant pool from the last 5 years, specifically reviewing those that took the GREs and those that were waived. Analysis indicates that there is little to no correlation in GRE score achievement and a student's success in the master's program.
- For students with low GRE quantitative scores that have been admitted, they have demonstrated very strong academic performance with GPAs 3.3 or above.
- The GRE has been seen as a barrier for students of color and low socioeconomic status, and with its removal it will allow the departments to access more applications that have not been submitted due to this requirement. It will allow the department to become broader and diverse in its student population.
- Rockefeller has also witnessed peer institutions begin to move away from the GRE as an admission criteria (George Washington, Marist, and SUNY Binghamton).

- The college plans to offer students additional resources prior to enrollment so if they are concerned specifically with the quantitative expectations of the program, they have the opportunity to refresh their skills and understand what lay ahead in the program.

Based on the department's justifications above, the committee voted to approve the proposed program changes (7 approve, 0 disapprove, 0 abstain).

Educational Policy and Leadership Program Proposals

The Department of Educational Policy and Leadership is proposing the following changes to two of their master's programs:

- Add "or other courses as advised" to several sections of the requirements for the Higher Education MS and the International Education Management and Leadership MA programs.
- Higher Education MS:
 - Program consists of Core Course (9 cr), Support Discipline (6 cr), Concentration Courses (12 cr), Elective Courses (6 cr), and Research Capstone (3 cr).
 - Add "or other courses as advised" to the Support Discipline, Concentration Courses, and Elective Courses
- International Education Management and Leadership MA:
 - Program consists of Core Courses (9 cr), Specialization Courses (9 cr), Data Analytics Course (3 cr), Electives (6 cr), and Research Capstone Course (3 cr)
 - Add "or other courses as advised" to the Specialization Courses, Data Analytics Course, and Elective Courses
- The justification for these changes is that it would permit subject-appropriate courses beyond those explicitly listed for each degree to count for the degree as long as the course is approved by the student's academic advisor. For example, a professor may offer a special topics course that fits directly into one or more categories of requirements for the master's degree, yet is not listed as qualifying course on the University webpages. The department wants academic advisors to be able to approve such a course to count towards the relevant degree. The department may also offer a rarely scheduled course in a given semester and they want this course to count towards the relevant degree with advisor approval.
- In all cases, the department will uphold degree standards rigorously and apply decisions equitably.
- It is also noted that both of these programs are fairly new (within 2 years) and new courses are being developed. Previous topics courses are transforming into established courses and this will allow the department to substitute appropriate courses into the students' programs.

Based on the department's justification above, the committee voted to approve the proposed program changes (7 approve, 0 disapprove, 0 abstain).

Data Science Master of Science Program Proposal

The Mathematics and Statistics Department is proposing the following changes to the Data Science MS program:

- Remove AMAT524 (advanced linear algebra) from the requirements and replace it with AMAT522 (linear algebra for applications).
- The new course AMAT522 exactly fits the program while AMAT524 was a temporary substitute.
- The remaining requirements are unchanged.

Based on the department's justification above, the committee voted to approve the proposed program changes (7 approve, 0 disapprove, 0 abstain).

Public Health Master of Public Health Program Proposal

The School of Public Health is requesting that the GRE be removed as an admission requirement to all of their Master in Public Health programs. Currently, the programs allow for GRE waivers in the following situations:

- Completion of the UAlbany SPH Certificate in Public Health Fundamentals and Principles
- Previous completion of a graduate degree with a minimum GPA of 3.0 from a US Institution
- Passing grades of Part 1 and 2 of the US Medical Licensing Exam
- Submission of MCAT, PCAT, DAT, GMAT or LSAT scores

The department justifies the changes based on the following:

- Statistical analysis examining the relationship between quantitative GRE scores and academic performance in the required statistics course. Little evidence found of a relationship between the quantitative score and the final grade in the course. Academic performance in undergraduate coursework is the more accurate predictor.
- Studies suggest that GRE scores are not the best indicator of ability to succeed, are culturally biased, and pose a significant financial barrier to underserved students. Miller and Stassun argue that the GRE better reflects demographic characteristics such as sex and color than of ability to succeed. Data obtained from ETS reports that on average women score 80 points lower than men, and African Americans score 200 points lower than white people (citation included in proposal).
- The costly financial burden includes cost of the exam, cost of sending the scores, cost of prep courses; this makes it unaffordable for prospective students. High scores have also been shown to correlate with the socioeconomic status of a student.
- The school cited multiple articles in its research.
- Peer institutions have eliminated the GREs: Boston University, Colorado School of Public Health, Drexel University, Emory, New York University, University of Maryland, Jackson State University and University at Washington.
- Removing the GRE will make the program more attractive to students who may not otherwise apply, thus enabling the school to welcome a larger and more diverse student body which is in line with the University's strategic goals.

Based on the department's justification above, the committee voted to approve the proposed program changes (8 approve, 0 disapprove, 0 abstain).

